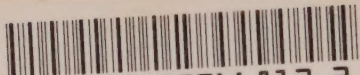


# FRANCESCA DA RIMINI



BY GABRIELE  
D'ANNUNZIO



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Sample of good play.

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FRANCESCA DA RIMINI







ELEONORA DUSE  
AS FRANCESCA DA RIMINI



# FRANCESCA DA RIMINI

By GABRIELE D' ANNUNZIO

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TRANSLATED BY  
ARTHUR SYMONS

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NEW YORK · FREDERICK A.  
STOKES COMPANY · PUBLISHERS

**A**mor che al cor gentil ratto s'apprende . . .  
mor che a nullo amato amar perdona . . .  
mor condusse noi ad una morte.

Copyright, 1902,  
BY FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY.

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*Francesca da Rimini ; Tragedia Gabriele D'Annunzio.*

Copyright, 1902,  
BY FRATELLI TREVES.

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TO THE DIVINE  
ELEONORA DUSE





## INTRODUCTION.

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"Francesca da Rimini" was acted for the first time at Rome, by Eleonora Duse and her company, on December 9, 1901. Has there, since "Hernani," been such a battle over a play in verse? The performance lasted five hours, and many of the speeches were inaudible on account of the noise in the theatre. Since then the play has been freely cut, it has been acted with the greatest success in the chief cities of Italy, and has raised more discussion than any play in verse of this century. The translation which follows has been made from the unabridged text.

The play is written in blank verse, but blank verse so varied as to be almost a kind of *vers libre*. This form of blank verse is not new in Italian. It is to be found in the pastoral tragedies of the Renaissance, in Tasso's "Aminta," in Guarino's "Pastor Fido." We need only open Leopardi to see almost exactly the same structure of verse. Take these lines of Leopardi ("Sopra un basso rilievo antico sepolcrale"):

"Morte ti chiama ; al cominciar del giorno  
L' ultimo istante. Al nido onde ti parti  
Non tornerai. L' aspetto  
De' tuoi dolci parenti  
Lasci per sempre. Il loco

A cui mova, è sotterra:  
Ivi fia d' ogni tempo il tuo soggiorno."

Now take these lines, chosen at random from  
" Francesca":

" Ma giammai  
m'eran fiorite, come in questo maggio,  
tante, tante ! Son cento,  
son più di cento. Guarda !  
S' io le tocco, m' abbruccio.  
Le vergini di Sant' Apollinari  
non ardono così nel loro cielo  
d'oro."

In English we shall find the most perfect example of blank verse varied into half-lyric measures in some of the choruses and speeches of "Samson Agonistes."

" But who is this? What thing of sea or land—  
Female of sex it seems—  
That so bedecked, ornate, and gay,  
Comes this way sailing,  
Like a stately ship  
Of Tarsus, bound for the isles  
Of Javan and Gadire,  
With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,  
Sails filled, and streamers waving,  
Courtèd by all the winds that hold them play?"

Matthew Arnold, in "Empedocles on Etna,"  
"The Strayed Reveller," and some of his most famous meditative pieces, has used the same metre, carrying his experiment indeed further, and playing with pauses in a more complicated way, not always, to my ear, with entire success. I am not sure that metre such as this can ever really become an English metre:

" Thou guardest them, Apollo!  
Over the grave of the slain Pytho,

Though young, intolerably severe!  
Thou keepest aloof the profane,  
But the solitude oppresses thy votary,  
The jars of men reach him not in thy valley,  
But can life reach him?  
Thou fencest him from the multitude:  
Who will fence him from himself?

Mr. Henley has made for himself a rough, serviceable metre in unrhymed verse, full of twitching nerves and capable of hurrying or dragging.

"Space and dread and the dark—  
Over a livid stretch of sky  
Cloud-monsters crawling like a funeral train  
Of huge primeval presences  
Stooping beneath the weight  
Of some enormous, rudimentary grief;  
While in the haunting loneliness  
The far sea waits and wanders with a sound  
As of the trailing skirts of Destiny  
Passing unseen  
To some immitigable end  
With her gray henchman, Death."

Now the essential difference between the metre of d'Annunzio and these other instances of a similar metre is that, with d'Annunzio, the metre is purely a means to an end, a dramatic end. He has aimed at giving variety and emphasis to blank verse, so as to make the verse render the speaker's mood with the greatest exactitude. Where, in ordinary blank verse, a single line is broken up into two or three small speeches, which have to be fitted into their five feet with an ingenuity which on the stage at least, goes for nothing, he lets his short lines stand more frankly by themselves And he moulds a long speech into greater flexi-

bility, letting the voice pause on a single short line coming after longer lines, for emphasis, or running a short, unaccentuated line rapidly into the next, in a very effectual kind of *enjambement*. Yet, with all its variety, this metre is not, as is so much contemporary French *vers libre*, a vague, unregulated metre, which may be read equally as prose or as verse, and in which one has to search for the beat while one is reading it. The beat is always regular, clear, unmistakable. With the exception of a few dactylic passages, of which the most important occurs in the address to the fire, it is strictly iambic, and it is made of the normal verse of five feet, subdivided into verse of three feet and two feet.\* As far as I recollect, the verse of four feet is never used, nor can I find a verse of four feet in the blank verse of Leopardi, though it is freely, and, I think, legitimately, used by every English experimenter in this metre. Italian verse, with its incessant elisions, its almost invariable double endings, lends itself, better than that of any other living language, to a metre which, in d'Annunzio's hands, becomes so easy, so much like prose, and yet so luxurious, so rich in cadence. In the translation which follows, I have of course rendered the double endings, for the most part, by single endings, using double endings at my discretion, as in ordinary English

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\* Sig. d'Annunzio writes to me: "I have added to the verse of eleven and of seven syllables, the verse of five, which is also iambic in structure. Thus the metre is formed of the hendecasyllable and of its two hemistichs (11-7-5.)."



blank verse. My version is literal, alike in words and rhythm, but my lines do not in every case correspond precisely with the lines of the original. They are intended to reproduce every effect of the original, as that can best be done in English verse, written on the principle of d'Annunzio's Italian verse.

In order to render the form of the original as closely as possible, I have often used weak endings which I should not have used had I been writing verse of my own. Take, for instance, these lines, which will be found on p. 25 of the Italian and also of the English :

"Con qui parlavi ? Con le donne ? Come  
sei venuto ? Rispondi mi ? Sei tu  
di Messer Paolo Malatesta ? Su,  
rispondi !"

In my elisions I have tried to follow the example of the Italian as far as I could, without absolutely violating the principles of English verse, and, in short, I have done all I could to make a faithful copy, at the risk of leaving it "a mere strict bald version of thing by thing," which, Browning tells us in the preface to his translation of the "Agamemnon," is after all, what the reader of a translation should first of all look for and expect to find.

The motto of "Francesca da Rimini" might well be the line of Dante:

"Noi che tingemmo il mondo di sanguigno,"  
and the play is more than a tragedy of two lovers, it is a study of an age of blood, the thirteenth century in Italy. In the real story, Paolo and Fran-

cesca were both married, she a mother and he a father of children, and it was only after ten years of marriage that Gianciotto surprised them together and stabbed them. 'Dante, in the fifth canto of the "Inferno," leaves out all but the bare facts of love and death. D'Annunzio refers once or twice to the wife, Orabile, but not to the children, nor does he leave any long interval between the beginning and end of the passion. But he gives us two people of flesh and blood, luxurious, pondering people, who love beautiful things, and dream over their memories; yet people who have no characteristics that might not have existed in an Italian man and woman of the thirteenth century. Paolo is a perfect archer, we see him shoot an arrow from the battlements, which, we are told later, has gone through the throat of one who mocked his brother to his face; we hear of his armour, his horse, as well as of his skill in music and the gentler arts. Francesca is full of tender feeling, and some of the most beautiful lines in the play are the lines which she speaks to her sister. But, as the man-at-arms on the battlements says of her:

"Quella  
Non è già donna di paura."

She questions him about the Greek fire which he is stirring in a cauldron, and lights one of the fiery staves, indifferent to the danger, intent only on the strange, new, perilous beauty. She is exalted by the sight of the blood-red roses growing in the sarcophagus, and she cries to the roses. Violent deeds go on around her wherever she is. In her father's

house brother fights with brother, and it is her brother's bleeding face which appears to her through the barred window, with ominous significance, at the close of the first act, as she sees Paolo for the first time, and offers him a rose. In the house of her husband she sees fighting from the walls, and her husband's brother, Malatestino, is brought in wounded in the eye. There is a prisoner whose cries come up from the dungeons underground, while Malatestino, who is afterwards to betray her to her husband, persecutes her with his love. She hates cruelty, but like one to whom it is a daily, natural thing, always about her path.

"To fight in battle is a lovely thing,  
But secret slaying in the dark I hate,"

she says to her husband, as she tells him of his brother's thirst for blood. Towards her husband her attitude is quite without modern subtlety; he has won her unfairly, she is unconscious of treachery towards him in loving another; she has no scruples, only apprehensions of some unlucky ending to love. And when that ending comes, and the lover is caught in the trap-door, as he is seeking to escape, and the husband pulls him up by the hair, and kills them both, the husband has no moralising to do; he bends his crooked knee with a painful movement, picks up his sword, and breaks it across the other knee.

The action of the play moves slowly, but it moves; behind all its lyrical outcries there is a hard grip on the sheer facts of the age, the definite realities of the passion. D'Annunzio has

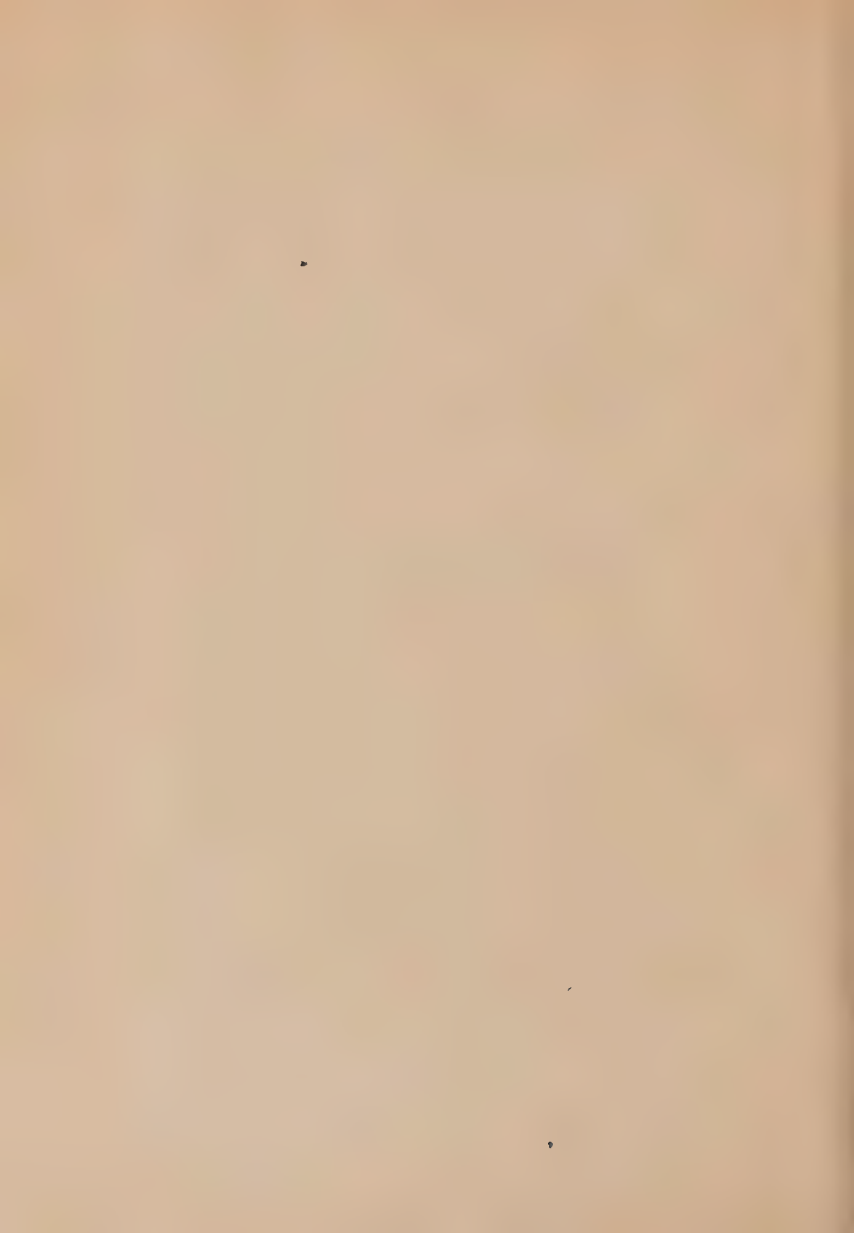
learnt something from Wagner, not perhaps the best that Wagner had to teach, in his over-amplification of detail, his insistence on so many things beside the essential things, his recapitulations, into which he has brought almost the actual Wagnerian "motives." When the moment is reached which must, in a play on this subject, be the great moment or the moment of failure, when the dramatist seems to come into actual competition with Dante, d'Annunzio is admirably brief, significant, and straightforward. In the scene in which "*Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse*," he has made his lovers read out of the actual book out of which Dante represents them as reading, the old French romance of "*Lancelot du Lac*," and the words which they repeat are the actual words of the book, put literally into Italian.

It is not any part of my purpose to compare "*Francesca da Rimini*" with Mr. Stephen Phillips' "*Paolo and Francesca*," but, after translating this scene, I had the curiosity to turn to the corresponding scene in the English play. The difference between them seemed to be the difference between vital speech, coming straight out of a situation, and poetising round a situation. In d'Annunzio you feel the blind force and oncoming of a living passion; and it is this energy which speaks throughout the whole of a long and often delaying play. Without energy, "*la grâce littéraire suprême*," as Baudelaire has called it, beauty is but a sleepy thing, decrepit or born tired. In "*Francesca da Rimini*" beauty speaks with the voice of life itself.

Arthur Symonds.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ



# DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

OSTASIO.	}	Sons and Daughters of Guido Minore da Polenta.
BANNINO.		
FRANCESCA.		
SAMARITANA.		

BIANCOFIORE.	}	Francesca's Women.
ALDA.		
GARSENDA.		
ALTICHIARA.		
ADONELLA. The Slave.		

SER TOLDO BERARDENGO.	}	Partisans of Guido.
ASPINELLO ARSENDI.		
VIVIANO DE' VIVIL.		
BERTRANDO LURO. An Archer.		

GIOVANNI, "The Lame," known as GIANCIOTTO.	}	Sons of Mala- testa da Ver- rucchio.
PAOLO "The Beautiful."		
MALATESTINO "The One-eyed."		

ODDO DALLE CAMINATE.	}	Partisans of Mala- testa.
FOSCOLO D'OLNANO.		
Archers. Men-at-Arms.		

The Merchant. The Merchant's Boy. The Doctor. The Jester. The Astrologer. The Musicians. The Torchbearers.

SCENE : *At Ravenna, in the House of the Polentani;  
at Rimini, in the House of the Malatesti.*





FRANCESCA DA RIMINI



# FRANCESCA DA RIMINI

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## ACT I.

*A Court in the House of the Polentani, adjacent to a garden that shines brightly through a marble screen, pierced in the form of a transept. A loggia runs round it above, leading on the right to the women's apartments. and in front, supported on small pillars, affords a double view. On the left is a flight of steps leading down to the threshold of the enclosed garden. At the back is a large door, and a low, barred window, through which can be seen a range of arches surrounding another larger court. Near the steps is a Byzantine sarcophagus, without a lid, filled with earth, like a flower pot, in which grows a crimson rose-bush.*

*The WOMEN are seen, leaning over the loggia, and coming down the stairs, gazing curiously at the JESTER, who carries his viol hanging by his side, and in his hand an old jerkin.*

ALDA.

Jester, hey, Jester !

GARSENDA.

Adonella, Adonella, here is the Jester  
In the court! O Biancofiore,  
The Jester ! he has come !

ADONELLA.

Are the gates open yet?

BIANCOFIORE.

Let's make the Jester sing.

ALDA.

Hey, tell me, are you that Gianni . . .

JESTER.

Sweet ladies . . .

ALDA.

That Gianni who was coming from Bologna?  
Gian Figo?

GARSENDA.

Are you Gordello who is coming from Ferrara?

JESTER.

Dear ladies . . .

ADONELLA.

What are you seeking there?

JESTER.

The trail of the scent.

BIANCOFIORE.

We brew in limbecs oils of lavender,  
And oils of spikenard.

JESTER.

I am no apothecary's pedlar, I.

ALTICHIARA.

You shall have a bunch though, my good night-  
ingale,  
If you will sing.

GARSENDA.

Look at him, how he droops !

JESTER.

Fair ladies, have you . . .

BIANCOFIORE.

Yes,

Heaps upon heaps.

ADONELLA.

Bags full

And coffers full of it. Madonna Francesca  
Can dip her beauty, if she has a mind to,  
In oil of lavender.

JESTER.

I thought rather to find the smell of blood  
In the house of Guido.

ALDA.

Blood of the Traversari : in the streets,  
In the streets you will find it.

ALL.

Polenta! Polenta! Down with the Traversari!

JESTER.

Heigho! Catch who catch can, go free who  
may !

The sparrows are becoming sparrow-hawks.

[*Shouts of laughter ring down the staircase, be-  
tween the twi-horned head-dresses.*]

ALL.

Grapple with the Ghibelline!

JESTER.

Be quiet now, don't let the archer near you,

Or he will fetch me suddenly such a bolt  
As will lay me out my length for all my life.

ALDA.

You swear you are a Guelph?

JESTER.

By San Mercuriale of Forlì  
(That sets the belfry crumbling on the pate  
Of the Feltran people) I tell you I am Guelph,  
As Guelph as Malatesta da Verrucchio.

GARSEDA.

Good then, you are safe; only be circumspect:  
You have leave to smell.

JESTER.

To smell? And not to eat?

I am a dog, then?

How many bitches are there in the place?

Let's see.

*[He goes down on hands and feet like a dog, and  
makes for the women.]*

GARSEDA.

Ah nasty dog!

ALDA.

Filthy dog!

ALTICHIARA.

Wicked dog!

Take that!

JESTER.

Ahi, ahi, you have smashed my viol,  
You have broken my bow.

ADONELLA.

Take that!



GARSENDA.

And that!

BIANCOFIORE.

And that!

JESTER.

They are all in heat!

I would I knew which one of you the most!

*[They all strike him on the back with their fists, laughing. And as the JESTER jumps about amongst them like a dog, they begin to dance round him, shaking out their perfumed skirts.]*

BIANCOFIORE.

Take hands, and dance a round!

ADONELLA.

Do you smell the spice,  
Lavender and spikenard?

ALTICHIARA.

I am flame and ice,  
I am flame and ice!

BIANCOFIORE.

Fresh in cool linen is sweet lavender!

ALDA.

Come in, bright eyes, into my garden fair!

ALTICHIARA.

An odour comes, no garden can I find.

ADONELLA.

How comes this lovely odour on the wind?

ALL.

Smell! Smell!

GARSENDA.

Sweet shift that long in lavender has lain;

Sweetheart, the time of May has come again.

ALL.

Smell! Smell!

ADONELLA.

I would I had my sweetheart near my side,  
And nearer than my shift is near to me.

Dear love is dear to me!

Dear love is dear to me!

ALL.

Smell! smell! smell!

JESTER

[*Standing up and trying to catch one of them.*]

Catch who catch can!

If I catch one of you. . .

[*With cries of laughter, they run up the stairs  
then stand panting with merriment.*]

ALDA

[*With a contemptuous gesture.*]

You are no sheep dog, you!

GARSEDA.

You are a pantry dog,

Poor Jester! have you not

More stomach now for food than bantering?

JESTER

[*Scratching his throat.*]

May be I have. I dined some while ago.

Fine scents fill no lean paunches.

GARSEDA.

Well then, well,

Go rather to the Archbishop Bonifazio,

He is the biggest glutton

That eats in the world: the Genoese. This house  
Is Guido da Polenta's.

JESTER.

Yellow with flower of the black hellebore,  
Because there is no juniper in the world,  
May all be salt to me,  
Ravenna women have it . . . in the round,  
Salt be to me!

GARSENDA.

Round-pated you yourself !  
You thought to get the better of us, eh?  
We have got the better of you.

BIANCOFIORE.

Sing, Jester!

ALDA.

Dance, Jester!

JESTER

[*Picking up his rag*].

You have pulled me all to pieces,  
Mischief o' me! Have you, by chance, a little. . .

GARSENDA.

A little bacon?

JESTER.

Have you a little scarlet?

ADONELLA.

Are you for jesting with us? We are ready.

BIANCOFIORE.

But who are you? that Gianni. . .

ALTICHIARA.

O, Biancofiore, look what clothes he has!  
The doublet is at loggerheads with the hose.

GARSENDA.

He is Gian Figo, who was coming from Bologna.

BIANCOFIORE.

Come from Bologna without a bolognino.

ALDA.

I am sure he is of the Lambertazza party.

GARSENDA.

An evil race!

ALDA.

He has been put to shame  
By the Geremei.

ALTICHIARA.

Have you not lost a principedom, noble sir?

GARSENDA.

O, Adonella, look at him: he has fled  
In nothing but his trousers.

JESTER.

And you will have them off me.

ADONELLA.

What a poor thing! Look at yourself in the  
glass,  
As crooked as a cross-bow on its stock.

BIANCOFIORE.

Now you will sing the spoiling of Bologna,  
And how King Enzo was made prisoner.

GARSENDA.

Have I not told you he is from Ferrara?

JESTER

[*Impatiently*].

I am from Ferrara and I am from Bologna.

GARSENDA.

Was it then you  
Who escorted from Bologna to Ferrara  
Ghisolabella de' Caccianimici  
To the good Marchese Opizzo?

JESTER.

Just so, just so, 'twas I, just as you say.

GARSENDA.

It was you too who made  
The match between the sister of the Marquese  
And that old and rich judge, him of Gallura,  
A shrivelled, wizened thing  
That had the help of his big man-servant?

JESTER.

Just so, 'twas I, just as you say; and I had  
In thanks for it. . .

ALDA.

A bone?

ADONELLA.

Two chestnuts?

BIANCOFIORE.

Three

Walnuts and a hazel-nut?

ALTICHIARA.

A stump of pimperl?

GARSENDA.

A pair of snails

And an acorn?

JESTER.

This mantle that you see, of Irish frieze?  
No; or of purple Tyrian samite? no;

But all of velvet crimson-coloured, lined  
With skins of miniver.

GARSENDA.

Look, look, Altichiara,  
The thing he is holding!

ALTICHIARA.

A little threadbare cloak.

GARSENDA.

No, no, it is a Romagna jerkin.

ALDA.

Then

You are Gordello, you are not Gian Figo.

ADONELLA.

But no, he is a Jew.

BIANCOFIORE.

He is the huckster Lotto  
Of Porto Sisi.

ALTICHIARA.

Sells fripperies and songs.

ADONELLA.

What have you with you? Have you rags or  
ballads?

JESTER.

Fool that I am, I thought to find myself  
In the palace of the nobles of Polenta,  
And here I am in a chirping nest of swallows.

GARSENDA.

Comfort yourself, I am satisfied by now  
That I have taught you, Master Merrymaker,  
Ravenna women are not easily beaten  
At the game of banter.

JESTER.

And of the pole, too.

ALDA.

You chuckle over it?

ADONELLA.

Will you whet your whistle?

BIANCOFIORE.

No, Alda: come now, make him sing to us.

GARSEDA.

Do you not see the sorry sort of viol

He trails here, Adonella?

It seems to me a sort of pumpkin cowed,

With its big belly and its monstrous neck.

The rose is meanly cut,

Here's a peg missing, here

The bass and tierce are gone.

Well, if he barks, his viol gapes in answer.

Go, scrawl arpeggios

Upon a rebeck, let the bow alone.

BIANCOFIORE.

You let the joke alone, then, Mona Berta.

Let us see now if he knows how to sing.

Come on then, Jester,

And sing us, if you can, a pretty song.

Do you know any of that troubadour

Who calls himself the Notary of Lentino?

Madonna Francesca knows a lovely one

Beginning this way: "Very mightily

Love holds me captive." Do you know the

song?

JESTER.

Yes, I will say it now,

If you have a little scarlet.



ALTICHIARA.

But what is it you want then, with your scarlet?

ADONELLA.

We are waiting, we are waiting!

JESTER.

I want you, if you will,

To put a patch for me

Upon this jerkin.

ALTICHIARA.

What a mad idea,

To patch Romagna woollen, and with scarlet!

JESTER.

I pray you, if you have it, do for me

This service. There is one tear here, in front,

Another on the elbow; here it is.

Have you two scraps?

ALTICHIARA.

I will put it right for you

If you will sing to us.

But I assure you, 'tis a novelty

To set the two together.

JESTER.

I go about in search of novelties,

As novel as myself:

That's just the reason.

But not long since I found a novelty,

As I was on my way:

I met with one,

Not two miles out of here,

That had his head of iron,

His legs of wood, and talked with both his  
shoulders.

BIANCOFIORE.

This is a novelty in very deed,  
But tell us how.

ADONELLA.

We are waiting! we are waiting!

JESTER.

Listen, and I will tell you. I met with one  
That wore an iron headpiece on his head  
And went to gather fir-cones in the wood  
Here at Ravenna, and he went on crutches,  
And when I asked him had he seen about  
A little friend of mine, he shrugged his shoulders,  
Saying by this means  
He had not seen him.

BIANCOFIORE

[*contemptuously*].

But this is a true thing.

JESTER.

Am I not novel,

That tell true things for fables? Catch who  
catch can!

So, you will do then what I asked of you?  
And after you have done it,  
You shall wait no great while before you learn,  
The occasion offering, that Gian Figo. . .

GARSEDA.

Ah!

You have let it out at last.

ALL.

He is Gian Figo!

JESTER.

Before you learn Gian Figo is as wise  
As Dinadan the King of Orbeland's son,  
That found his wisdom by forgetting love.

ALTICHIARA.

But now enough of this: time for a song!

BIANCOFIORE.

"There comes a time to rise . . ."

Do you not know the song King Enzo made,  
The King that lost his kingdom in a battle  
Against Bologna, and was put in prison  
In a big iron cage, and ended his life there,  
Singing his sorrows?

Seven years ago in March: I can remember.

"There comes a time to rise, a time to fall,  
A time for speaking and for keeping silence."

ADONELLA.

No, no, Gian Figo,  
Tell us instead the song  
Made by King John, John of Jerusalem,  
"For the flower of all the lands."

GARSENDA.

No, tell us that of good King Frederick,  
"A song of pure delight."

(Madonna Francesca, the flower of all Ravenna  
Knows it) made for the flower  
Of Soria when the sire of Suabia  
Loved a most worthy maiden  
His wife had brought with her from over sea,  
And brought to honour; and this wife of the  
King  
Of Suabia was no other than the daughter

Of John, King of Jerusalem, and her name  
 Was Isabella, and she died, and then  
 King Frederick took for his wife the sister  
 Of the simple Henry of England; and he loved  
 her

Exceedingly, because, like our Madonna  
 Francesca, she was skilled  
 In music, and all ways of lovely speech;  
 And this was the third wedding; and she, then,  
 That sang and played all day and all night long,  
 Had . . .

[BIANCOFIORE covers her mouth with her hand.]

JESTER.

What a bibble babble! O poor King Enzo,  
 There never is a time here to be silent.  
 What's to be done with all your merchandise,  
 Gian Figo, chitter, chatter, chattering,  
 Here are four voices, and more like a thousand!

ALTICHIARA.

Listen to me now, Jester. Let the King  
 Alone. He is dead and buried. Say instead  
 "O mother mine,  
 Give me a husband." "Tell me why, my  
 child."

"That he may give me happy. . ."

ALDA.

That is old!

Listen to me, Jester.

ALTICHIARA.

Then, "Monna Lapa,  
 She spun and span. . ."

ALDA.

No!

ALTICHIARA.

Then: "O garden-close,  
I enter and nobody knows."

ALDA.

Hush!

ALTICHIARA.

Then: "Let's all  
Have seven lovers,  
That's one for every day of the week."

ALDA.

Hush!

ALTICHIARA.

Then:

"Monna Aldruda, don't be a prude, a  
Piece of good news. . ."

ALDA.

O hush! Biancofiore,  
Do shut her mouth. Jester, listen to me:  
These are old songs. . .

ADONELLA.

There's a new troubadour  
Known at Bologna: surely you have heard him?  
He's the new fashion;  
They call him Messer Guido. . . Messer Guido  
Di . . . di . . .

JESTER.

Di Guinizello.

He was one that went out with the Lambertazzi,  
Took refuge at Verona, and there died.

ALDA.

Good, let him die: he's for the Emperor.  
May he go now and make his rhymes in hell!

Listen to me, Jester; tell us a story  
Of knights.

BIANCOFIORE.

Yes, yes, the knights of the Round Table!  
Do you know their stories?  
The love of Iseult of the golden hair?

JESTER.

I know the histories of all the knights  
And all the knightly deeds of chivalry  
Done in King Arthur's time,  
And specially I know of Messer Tristan  
And Messer Lancelot of the Lake, and Messer  
Percival of the Grail, that took the blood  
Of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of Galahad,  
And of Gawain, and the rest. I know them all.

ALDA.

Of Guenevere?

ADONELLA.

Good luck, Jester, good luck!  
We will tell Madonna Francesca what you know,  
Will we not, Alda?  
She takes delight in them;  
Jester, she will reward you bountifully.

JESTER.

She will give me the remainder . . .

ADONELLA.

What remainder?

JESTER.

Why, the two scraps of scarlet.

ADONELLA.

She will give you  
Quite other gifts, the bountifullest gifts.

Rejoice that she is marrying;  
 Messer Guido marries her to a Malatesta;  
 The wedding day is close at hand.

BIANCOFIORE.

Meanwhile

Tell us a story: we are all ears. "There is time  
 To listen," said the prisoner.

[*They group themselves about the JESTER, leaning towards him: he begins.*]

JESTER.

How the fay Morgana sent to Arthur's Court  
 The shield foretelling the great love to be  
 Between good Tristan and the flower-like Iseult;  
 And this shall be between the loveliest lady  
 And the most knightly knight in all the world.  
 And how Iseult and Tristan drank together  
 The draught of love that Iseult's mother, Lotta,  
 Had destined for her daughter and King Mark.  
 And how the draught of love, being perfect,  
 brought

Both these two lovers to one single death.

[*The women stand listening, the JESTER preludes on  
 the viol and sings.*]

"Now, when the dawn of day was nigh at hand,  
 King Mark of Cornwall and good Tristan rose. . ."

THE VOICE OF OSTASIO

[*behind the scenes*].

Tell him, the Puglian thief,  
 Tell him, I say, that I will wash my hands  
 And feet in his heart's blood!

ALDA.

Messer Ostasio!



GARSENDA.

Come away, come, come!

[*They scatter, and rush up the stairs, with laughter and cries, and along the loggia.*]

JESTER.

My jerkin, my good jerkin! I commend you,  
My jerkin, and the scarlet!

ALTICHIARA

[*leaning over the loggia*].

Come back at noon:

It shall be ready.

OSTASIO DA POLENTA *enters by the great door at the back, accompanied by* SER TOLDO BERARDENGO.

OSTASIO

[*seizing the terrified JESTER*].

What are you doing here, rascal?

Whom were you talking with, the women? How

Did you come here? Answer me, I say. Are  
you

From Messer Paolo Malatesta? Now,  
Answer!

JESTER.

O sir, you are holding me too hard.

Ahi!

OSTASIO.

Did you come here with Messer Paolo?

JESTER.

No, sir.

OSTASIO.

You lie!

JESTER.

Yes, sir.

OSTASIO.

You were talking with  
The women; what did you say? something, no  
doubt,  
Concerning Messer Paolo. What was it?

JESTER.

No, sir, no, sir, only of Messer Tristan.

OSTASIO.

Take care; you do not trifle with me twice,  
Or you shall keep this tryst of yours with  
Tristan  
Longer than you intend, unseemly fool.

JESTER.

Abi, ahi! what have I done to vex you, sir?  
I was only singing something.  
I was only singing a song of the Round Table.  
The ladies asked me for a history  
Of knights. . . I am a Jester and I sing  
From hunger, and my hunger  
Hoped better things than beating in the house  
Of the most noble Messer Guido. I,  
That keep no hack, have footed  
From the Castle of Calbeli  
All the way here: I left  
Messer Rinieri fortifying his keep  
With some seven hundred strong  
Of infantry.

OSTASIO.

You come from Calbeli?

JESTER.

Yes, sir.

OSTASIO.

Were you ever with the Malatesti  
At Rimino?

JESTER.

No, sir; never, sir.

OSTASIO.

Then

You do not know Messer Paolo, the Beautiful,  
That dotes on jesters, and would have them sing  
And play at all times in his company?

JESTER.

Unluckily I do not know him, sir,  
But I would gladly know him. And if I find  
him,

I pray to be found always at his side.  
Long life to Messer Paolo Malatesta!

*[He is about to retire hastily. OSTASIO catches  
hold of him again, and calls the ARCHER  
who is on guard in the other Court.]*

OSTASIO.

Jacomello!

JESTER.

What have I done, and why  
Do you do me violence?

OSTASIO.

Too much talk.

JESTER.

I am mute.

It is hunger barking in me. Keep me prisoner  
In the kitchen, and I will be as still as oil.

OSTASIO.

Will you be silent, rascal? Jacomello!  
I give this prattle-seller to your charge,  
See that you bit and bib him.

JESTER.

A spice cake,

Give me a spice cake.

OSTASIO.

Give him a box on the ears.

JESTER

[*As the ARCHER thrusts him out*].

When Madonna Francesca knows how you have  
used me. . . .

I am to sing at her wedding.

Long life to Messer Paolo Malatesta!

[*Raging, and full of suspicion, OSTASIO draws the  
NOTARY towards the sarcophagus.*]

OSTASIO.

These jesters and the like men of the Court  
Here in Romagna are a very plague,  
Worse than the Emperor's rabble. They are  
tongues  
Of women; they know everything, say every-  
thing;  
They go about the world

Spreading abroad their news and novelties;  
Their ears are at the keyholes of us all.  
Who wants to know how the good Papal Rector  
Lay with the wife of Lizio da Valbona?  
Who wants to know  
How much Rinieri da Calbeli has taken  
Out of the purses of the Geremei?  
As for this rascal  
That gossiped with the women of Francesca,  
If he had been a jester  
Of the Malatesti  
By now the women had heard all the news  
There is to tell of Paolo,  
And all the cunning plan had been vain,  
Ser Toldo, that you counselled  
Out of your manifold wisdom.

SER TOLDO.

As for him,

He was so poor and threadbare,  
How could I take him for a follower  
Of such a lordly knight as Paolo,  
He being so bountiful  
With gentry such as these?  
But you are well-advised in biting him.  
These creatures of the Court  
May be by way of being soothsayers,  
And often steal the trade  
Of the astrologers.

OSTASIO.

True. And this slave

Of Cyprus, that my sister loves so dearly,  
I have my doubts of her; she too, I think,  
Is something of a soothsayer; I know

That she interprets dreams. The other day  
I saw my sister full of heavy thoughts,  
And almost sorrowful,  
As if some evil dream had come to her;  
And only yesterday  
I heard her heave such a long, heavy sigh  
As if she had a trouble in her heart,  
And I heard Samaritana  
Say to her: "What is it, sister? Why do you  
weep?"

SER TOLDO.

Messer Ostasio, it is the month of May.

OSTASIO.

In truth there is no peace for us until  
This marriage is well over. And I fear,  
Ser Toldo, lest some scandal come of it.

SER TOLDO.

Yet you know well, what sort  
Of woman is your sister, and how high  
Of heart and mind. If she see this Gianciotto,  
So lamed and bent, and with those eyes of his,  
As of an angry devil,  
Before the marriage-contract  
Be signed and sealed, why, neither will your  
father  
Nor you, nor any, of a certainty  
Bring her to take  
The man for husband, not although you set  
Your dagger at her throat, or haled her through  
Ravenna by the hair.

OSTASIO.

I know it well, Ser Toldo, for my father

Gave her for foster-mother  
A sword of his of a miraculous edge,  
That he had tempered in Cesena blood  
When he was Podestà.

SER TOLDO.

Well then, I say,  
If this be so, and you desire the match,  
There is no other way to compass it.  
And seeing that Paolo Malatesta comes  
As procurator of Gianciotto here,  
And with full powers  
For the betrothal of Madonna Francesca,  
I say you should proceed  
Instantly to the marriage,  
If you would sleep in peace, Messer Ostasio.  
Paolo is a fair and pleasant youth,  
And makes a brave decoy,  
Undoubtedly; yet it is far too easy  
To learn that he is married to Orabile.  
And you, did you not beat this jester but  
For fear of idle talk?

OSTASIO.

Yes, you are right,  
Ser Toldo; we must put an end to this.  
My father is returning from Valdoppio  
This very night; we will have all prepared  
And ready for to-morrow.

SER TOLDO.

Very good,  
Messer Ostasio.

OSTASIO.

Yet . . . What will come of it?

SER TOLDO.

If you do all, as all this should be done,  
With secrecy and prudence, Madonna Francesca  
Will find out nothing till at Rimino,  
She wakes, the morning after  
Her wedding day, and sees  
Beside her . . .

OSTASIO.

Ah, it is like some vile revenge!

SER TOLDO.

And sees beside her rise  
Gianciotto.

OSTASIO.

O, she is so beautiful !

And we avenge ourselves upon her beauty,  
Almost as if she wronged our house and us  
In coming to be born  
Here like a flower in the midst of so much iron.  
We are giving her to the lame Malatesta  
For the sake of that poor hundred infantry !  
But is she not herself  
Worth more than all the lordship of Romagna ?  
False notary, how did you poison first  
My father's mind ? All this  
Is your base bargaining. I will not have it.  
Do you understand ?

SER TOLDO.

Why, what tarantula bites you,  
Messer Ostasio ?  
Surely you will not find  
A better match to make in all Romagna ?

.



OSTASIO.

The Malatesti ? Who then after all  
Are these Verrucchio folk ? By this alliance  
Shall we have got Cesena,  
Cervia, Faenza, Forli, Civitella,  
Half of Romagna ?  
A hundred infantry !  
To hunt the Traversara region, O  
The mighty succour !  
And Dovadella, and Zello, and Montaguto  
Already in our power perhaps. Gianciotto !  
But who is he, Gianciotto ? When I think  
How that Traversarian widow,  
That ancient scabby bitch, has mated with  
(After the nephew of the Pope) the son  
Of Andrea, the King of Hungary. . . .

SER TOLDO.

What is the King of Hungary to you ?

OSTASIO.

But here are we, with this  
Puglian clodhopper,  
This Guglielmetto that now vaunts himself  
As the legitimate heir  
Of Paolo Traversari,  
And harries us ; and we shall never break him  
With this mere hundred infantry, and he  
Will surely come again with help from Foglia.  
What shall we hope for then  
From Malatesta ?

SER TOLDO.

Malatesta is the chief of all the Guelphs  
Now in Romagna, and the chief defender

Of the Church, and he has the favour of the  
 Pope,  
 And he was made the governor of Florence  
 Under King Charles, and whosoever seeks  
 A captain. . . .

OSTASIO.

Notary.

Guido di Montefeltro shattered him,  
 Once, at the bridge of San Procolo. Notary,  
 Guglielmino de' Pazzi drove him back  
 At Reversano, and has made him since  
 Give up the fortress of Cesena.

SER TOLDO.

Ay,

But the victory at Colle di Valdelsa  
 Against the Sienese,  
 The time he slaughtered Provenzan Salvani?  
 But when he made Count Guido prisoner  
 On the borders of Ancona, and brought him  
 back,  
 Him and his men, to Rimino? But when  
 He intercepted  
 The famous secret letters  
 From the Emperor Baldwin to King Manfred?  
 Come,  
 In truth it seems to me,  
 Messer Ostasio,  
 Your memory is then no longer Guelph.

OSTASIO.

If the Devil comes to me and lends me a hand  
 That I may root and ruin the evil race  
 Of the slave Pasquetta and the Puglian hag,  
 I am for the Devil, notary.

SER TOLDO.

Ah, ah! I guessed the truth:  
It is the tarantula of Puglia bites you.

OSTASIO.

The Emperor Frederick (God, for this thing  
Grant him a cup of water down in hell!)  
Had utterly destroyed the seed of them,  
When he hurled Aica Traversari headlong  
Into the fiery furnace.  
And lo, one day there comes into Ravenna  
A certain slave, Pasquetta, with her sweetheart,  
And tells you: "I am Aica,"  
And comes on one Filippo, an Archbishop,  
And he affirms her the legitimate heir,  
And with the taking over of the Dukedom  
Makes her the lady mistress! And from that  
The filthy vagabond of a husband holds  
The headship of the very Ghibelline party  
Against the house of Polenta! O Ser Toldo,  
Now we are doing deeds of chivalry  
Against Guglielmo Francisio, bastard  
Of shepherd-folk. Do you understand?

SER TOLDO.

But you,

Have you not driven him out of Ravenna?

OSTASIO.

With the infantry of Gianciotto Malatesta?

SER TOLDO.

You are ungrateful, Messer Ostasio.  
Gianciotto Malatesta in two days  
Broke all the bars and gratings in the streets;  
Between Sant' Agata and Porta San Mamante,

He massacred the gang  
Of the Anastagi;  
Between San Simone and Porta San Vittore  
His heavy cross-bolts cleared  
The whole pack in a breath.  
Nor is he ever one to spare himself,  
But proved his courage,  
There, with a buckler braced about his arm,  
A rapier in his hand ;  
And always in the crush  
Set on his priceless horse,  
A raging beast that gave his enemies  
What travail more he could, so that he had  
Always some dozen more or less of men  
Under his horse's hoof; and Stefano  
Sibaldo, that stood by,  
Swears, when the Lamester does  
A feat of arms, it is beautiful to see him;  
He is a master in the art of war!

OSTASIO.

O Ser Toldo, you had certainly your share  
Of the booty! You will take away their skill  
From those who sang the song of the twelve  
barons  
Of Charlemagne,  
Lord of the flowing beard. How much, I pray,  
Came to your share?

SER TOLDO.

The tarantula of Puglia  
Is a certain sort of spider,  
That brings all kinds of luck to those he bites.  
I am not now, alas,  
All that I have been once!

But the Malatesti always have been ill  
Bearers of shame, and now Gianciotto knows  
The way by which one gets inside the walls  
Here at Ravenna. . . . But you might give your  
sister,  
No doubt, to the Prince Royal of Salerno,  
Or to the Doge of Venice.

OSTASIO

[*absorbed*].

Ah! is she

Not worth a kingdom? How beautiful she is!  
There never was a sword that went so straight  
As her eyes go, if they but look at you.  
Yesterday she was saying: "Who is it  
You give me to?" When she walks, and her  
hair  
Falls all about her to her waist, and down  
To her strong knees (she is strong, though very  
pale)  
And her head sways a little, she gives forth joy  
Like flags that wave in the wind  
When one sets forth against a mighty city  
In polished armour. Then  
She seems as if she held  
The eagle of Polenta  
Fast in her fist, like a trained hawk, to fling him  
Forth to the prey. Yesterday she was saying:  
"Who is it you give me to?"  
Why should I see her die?

SER TOLDO.

Now you might give your sister  
To the King of Hungary  
Or better, to the Paleologue.

OSTASIA.

Be silent,

Ser Toldo, for to-day  
I am not patient.

THE VOICE OF BANNINO.

Ostasio! Ostasio!

OSTASIO.

By God! here is Bannino, here is the bastard  
That pants and lolls his tongue.  
I knew it.

BANNINO *appears at the door at the back of the stage, panting and dishevelled, like a fugitive, with ASPINELLO, ARSENDI, VIVIANO DE' VIVII, and BERTRANDO LURO, who are bleeding and covered with dust.*

BANNINO.

Ostasio!

The men of Forlì have attacked the waggons  
Of salt, by Cervia;  
They have put to flight the convoy and over-  
turned  
The waggons.

OSTASIO

[*Shouting*].

Ah, I knew it!

But they have not cut your throat?

ASPINELLO.

The Ghibellines that were exiled from Bologna.  
With those too of Faenza and Forlì

Gather in companies over all the land  
And are laying all things waste with fire and  
sword.

OSTASIO.

Jesu our Lord, good tidings for your Vicar!

VIVIANO.

And they have burned Monte Vecchio, Valcapra,  
Pianetto. They have laid waste Strabatanza  
and Biserno

For Lizio da Valbona,  
They have laid waste, for the Count  
Ugo da Cerfugnano,  
The country of Rontana and of Quarmento.

OSTASIO.

God of mercy, still good tidings,  
Good tidings to thy servants, and good tidings!

BERTRANDO.

Guido di Montefeltro  
Takes horse to Calbeli  
With engines, and balistas;  
And he will have the castle.

OSTASIO.

More! more!  
Christ Jesus, to thy praise always!

VIVIANO.

There was Scarpetta  
Of the Ordelaffi with the Forlì folk.

BANNINO.

They have put to flight the convoy and over-  
turned  
The waggons and taken cattle

And horses, and have killed  
Malvicino da Lozza  
And many soldiers, and made prisoner  
Pagano Coffa; and the others in disorder  
Have fled in search of safety towards the sea.

OSTASIO.

And you, you towards the land,  
As fast as horse could carry you. I knew it  
I knew it well.  
Where did you leave your sword?  
And you have thrown away your helmet too.  
Save himself he who can! That is your cry.

BANNINO.

My sword? I broke my sword  
In the very rage of striking blows with it.  
There were three hundred, maybe four, against  
us.  
Aspinello, Bertrando,  
Say, both of you, and you  
Viviano, say if I did well or no.  
I had against me more than twenty men  
That would have taken me; and I carved my  
life  
With my own hand out of their flesh and bone.  
Say, all of you!

OSTASIO.

You see

They cannot answer for you; they are tasked  
To stanch the flowing of their blood, and wipe  
The dust away that clings about their faces.  
But you are clean, you; cuirass, sleeves, all  
clean,



Spotless. Your enemies  
Had got no veins then in their bodies? You  
Have not a scratch upon your whited face,  
O mighty man of valour in your words!

[*The THREE SOLDIERS, taking their harness  
off their backs, and wiping it, move away.*]

BANNINO

Ostasio! Ostasio! Enough!

OSTASIO.

I knew it well,  
I had but laughter when  
My father picked you out  
To lead the waggon safely in. I said:  
"May the good Bishop of Cervia  
Preserve him with his crozier! In Ravenna  
'Tis very certain we shall have no salt."  
Did I say wrong? Go, go, Bannino, go  
And mince the lungs of hares into a dish  
For sparrow-hawks.

BANNINO.

You should be silent, you,  
While I was in the fray,  
Stayed safe at home, plotting with notaries.

OSTASIO.

O lord and leader of harlots, you shall know  
That if the men of Forlì did not catch you,  
Because you were too nimble,  
'Tis I will catch you.

BANNINO.

What? with treachery,  
After your fashion?

OSTASIO.

I will do it so that you,  
This time at least, do not go whimpering home  
To tell my father.

SER TOLDO.

Peace! peace!

BANNINO.

I will tell him  
Something I know, this time.

OSTASIO.

What do you know?

BANNINO.

You know the thing I mean.

SER TOLDO.

Peace, peace, O peace!

Be brothers!

OSTASIO.

He is from another nest.

SER TOLDO.

Messer Ostasio, he is but a boy.

OSTASIO.

Speak then, if you know how to wound a man  
At any rate with your tongue.

BANNINO.

You know the thing  
I mean. I keep my counsel,

OSTASIO.

No, pour out  
Your gall, that is now painted in your face,  
Or I will wring you up as if I wrung  
A wet rag out.

BANNINO.

Ostasio,

I am not so skilled in pouring out my gall  
As you your wine  
With an unshaken hand.

OSTASIO.

What wine?

BANNINO.

Your wine, pure wine, pure wine, I mean.

OSTASIO.

Listen to me, bastard!

BANNINO.

Our good old father

Fell sick one day. With what a tenderness  
You watched about him, O you best of sons!  
Do you know now? do you know? I know a  
thing

That you too know.

God dry your right hand up!

OSTASIO.

Ah, what a woman's lie is that! O bastard,  
Your day has come at last;  
No use in flying from the enemy!

[*He draws his sword and rushes upon BANNINO,  
who leaps aside and avoids the blow. He is  
about to follow him, when SER TOLDO tries  
to draw him back.*]

SER TOLDO.

Messer Ostasio, what is it you would do?  
Let him alone! Let him alone! He is  
Your brother. What would you do to him?  
[*The SLAVE comes out on the loggia and watches.*]

BANNINO

[*terrified*].

O father,

O father, help! Francesca, O sister, help!

No! you will kill me. Wretch! Wretch! No,

no, pardon,

Ostasio! No, I will not tell . . .

[*Seeing the point at his throat, he kneels down.*]

The poison

Was not yours.

[*The THREE SOLDIERS, unarmed, have come back.*]

No, I will not tell! O pardon!

[*OSTASIO wounds him in the cheek. He swoons.*]

OSTASIO.

Nothing, nothing, it is nothing.

[*He leans over and looks at him.*]

It is nothing;

He has fainted; I have only pricked the skin;

Not in a bad place, no; and not in anger.

I pricked him just a little

That he might learn not to fear naked steel,

That he might bear him better in the fray

And not lose sword and helmet

When he turns tail next on the Ghibelline.

[*The THREE SOLDIERS lift BANNINO.*]

Take him away to Maestro Gabbadeo,

And let his wounds be stanch'd

With salt out of the Cervia salt-mines.

[*He watches the wounded man as he is borne away, then closes the great door with a clang.*]

*The SLAVE silently retires from the loggia.*]

Come,

Ser Toldo, let us go.

SER TOLDO.

What will your father  
Say when he comes?

OSTASIO.

My father  
Is much too kind to this young bastardling.

*[He looks gloomily on the ground.]*

He is from another nest, and he was hatched  
Not by the eagle, no, but by a jay.

Did you not hear what he was stuttering?

About a wine, a wine . . . *[He pauses grimly.]*

It was a stock

Suborned by some one of the Anastagi.

Christ guard my father and my house from  
traitors!

SER TOLDO.

And Madonna Francesca then?

OSTASIO.

Yes, we will give her  
To the Malatesta.

SER TOLDO.

May God prosper it!

OSTASIO.

The vengeance that wait for us are great  
And many, and some tears shall flow in the  
world,

Please God, more bitter than the salt in all  
The salt-mines of this Cervia. Come with me,  
Ser Toldo, Paolo Malatesta waits.

*[They go out.]*

The SLAVE reappears, carrying a bucket and a sponge. She comes down the stairs in silence, barefooted. She looks at the bloodstains on the pavement and goes down on her knees to wash them up. From the rooms above is heard the song of the WOMEN.

CHORUS OF WOMEN.

*Ah me, the sorrow of heart  
In the heart that loves too well. Ah me!  
Ah me, if the heart could tell  
How love in the heart is a flame. Ah me!*

[FRANCESCA and SAMARITANA are seen coming out on the loggia side by side, with their arms about each other. The chorus of WOMEN follows them, carrying distaffs of different colours; but pauses on the lighted loggia, standing as in a singing gallery, while the two sisters go down the stairs to the level of the garden. The slave, having washed out the stains, hurriedly pours the bloodstained water in her bucket into the sarcophagus among the flowers.]

FRANCESCA

[pausing on the stairs].

It is love makes them sing!

[She throws back her head a little, as if abandoning herself to the breath of the melody, light and palpitating.]

WOMEN.

*Ah me, the sorrow and shame,  
In the sad heart on the morrow Ah me!*

FRANCESCA.

They are intoxicated with these odours.  
Do you not hear them? With a sighing fall  
Sadly they sing  
The things of perfect joy.

[*She withdraws her arm from her sister's waist,  
and moves a little away, pausing while the  
other takes another step downward.*]

WOMEN.

*Ah me, the bitter sorrow.  
All life long. Ah me!*

FRANCESCA.

Like running water  
That goes and goes, and the eye sees it not,  
So is my soul.

SAMARITANA

[*With a sudden alarm, clinging closer to her sister*].

Francesca,

Where are you going, who is taking you?

FRANCESCA.

Ah, you awaken me.

[*The song pauses. The WOMEN turn their backs,  
looking down into the other court. They  
seem to be on the watch. The twi-horned  
headdresses and the tall distaffs shine in the  
sun, and now and then there is a whispering  
and rustling of lips and garments in the clear  
sunlight.*]

SAMARITANA.

O, sister, sister,

Listen to me: stay with me still! O stay  
With me! we were born here,  
Do not forsake me, do not go away,

Let me still keep my bed  
Beside your bed, and let me still at night  
Feel you beside me,

FRANCESCA.

He has come.

SAMARITANA.

Who? Who has come  
To take you from me?

FRANCESCA.

Sister, he has come.

SAMARITANA.

He has no name, he has no countenance,  
And we have never seen him.

FRANCESCA.

It may be

That I have seen him.

SAMARITANA.

I have never been apart  
From you, and from your breath;  
My life has never seen but with your eyes;  
O, where can you have seen him, and not I  
Seen him as well?

FRANCESCA.

Where you

Can never come, sweetheart, in a far place  
And in a lonely place  
Where a great flame of fire  
Burns, and none feed that flame.

SAMARITANA.

You speak to me in riddles,  
And there is like a veil over your face.  
Ah, and it seems as if you had gone away,



And from far off  
Turned and looked back; and your voice sounds  
to me  
As out of a great wind.

FRANCESCA.

Peace, peace, dear soul,  
My little dove. Why are you troubled? Peace;  
You also, and ere long,  
Shall see your day of days,  
And leave our nest as I have left it; then  
Your little bed shall stand  
Empty beside my bed; and I no more  
Shall hear through dreams at dawn  
Your little naked feet run to the window,  
And no more see you, white and barefooted,  
Run to the window, O my little dove,  
And no more hear you say to me: "Francesca,  
Francesca, now the morning-star is born,  
And it has chased away the Pleiades."

SAMARITANA.

So we will live, ah me,  
So we will live forever;  
And time shall flee away,  
Flee away always!

FRANCESCA.

And you will no more say to me at morn:  
"What was it in your bed that made it creak  
Like reeds in the wind?" Nor shall I answer  
you:  
"I turned about to sleep,  
To sleep and dream, and saw,  
As I was sleeping, in the dream I dreamed. . ."

Ah, I shall no more tell you what is seen  
In dreams. And we will die,  
So we will die forever;  
And time shall flee away,  
Flee away always!

SAMARITANA.

O Francesca, O Francesca, you hurt my heart,  
And see, Francesca,  
You make me tremble all over.

FRANCESCA.

Little one, peace,  
Peace, be at rest.

SAMARITANA.

You told me of the dream  
You dreamed last night, and while  
You spoke I seemed to hear  
A sound of voices calling out in anger,  
And then a cry, and then  
The sound of a door shutting; and then silence.  
You did not finish telling me your dream,  
For then  
The women began singing, and you stopped;  
And you have left my heart in pain for you.  
Whom is it that our father gives you to?

FRANCESCA.

Sister, do you remember how one day  
In August we were on the tower together?  
We saw great clouds rise up out of the sea,  
Great clouds heavy with storm,  
And there was a hot wind that gave one thirst;  
And all the weight of the great heavy sky  
Weighed over on our heads; and we saw all

.

The forest round about, down to the shore  
Of Chiassi, turn to blackness, like the sea;  
And we saw birds flying in companies  
Before the murmurs growing on the wind.  
Do you remember? We were on the tower;  
And then, all of a sudden, there was dead  
Silence. The wind was silent, and I heard  
Only the beating of your little heart;  
And then a hammer beat,  
As by the roadside some flushed plunderer,  
Hot for more plunder, bent  
Shoeing his horse in haste.  
The forest was as silent as the shadow  
Over the tombs;  
Ravenna, dusk and hollow as a city  
Sacked by the enemy, at nightfall. We,  
We two, under that cloud  
(Do you remember?) felt as if death came  
Nearer, yet moved no eyelid, but stood there,  
Waiting the thunder.

[*She turns to the Slave, who stands motionless  
beside the sarcophagus.*]

O Smaragdi, who,  
Who was it, in the song among your people,  
That stood, shoeing his horse under the moon,  
And when his mother spoke to him, and said:  
“My son, I pray you take not in your course  
The sister when you take the brother, nor  
Lovers that love each other with true love,”  
Answered her sourly back:  
“If three I find, three I take; if I find  
Two, I take one; and if I find but one,  
I take the one I find” ?  
What was the name they gave him in your land?

SLAVE.

An evil name  
It is not good for any man to name.

FRANCESCA.

Tell me, what will you do without me here,  
Smaragdi? What is there that I can leave you  
When I go hence?

SLAVE.

Three cups of bitterness

Leave me:

The first that I may drink at early morning;  
The second, on the stroke  
Of mid-day; and the third,  
Soon after vespers.

FRANCESCA.

No, I will not leave

Three cups of bitterness, but you shall come  
With me, Smaragdi, to the city of Rimino,  
And you shall be with me, and we will have  
A window opening upon the sea,  
And I will tell you over all my dreams,  
Because you see unveiled  
The face of sorrow and the face of joy;  
And I will speak to you of that most sweet  
Sister, my little dove;  
And you will stand, and, looking through the  
window,  
See all the skiffs and galleys on the sea,  
And you will sing: "My galley of Barbary,  
What is the port you make for, and the shore  
Where you would anchor? Cyprus I would  
make for,  
And at Limisso anchor,

And land my sailors for a kiss, my captain,  
For love!" Come now, must I not take you  
with me  
To Rimino, Smaragdi?

SLAVE.

To go with you

It were a happiness to tread on thorns,  
And to pass through the flames  
To be with you.  
You are the heaven with stars,  
The sea with waves.

FRANCESCA.

The sea with waves!  
But tell me, what are you doing with the bucket,  
Smaragdi?

SLAVE.

I have watered

The roses.

FRANCESCA.

Why then have you watered them  
Out of their season? Why? Samaritana  
Will be angry with you. She  
Gives water to the roses  
As soon as the bell sounds for vespers. Come,  
What do you say, Samaritana?

SAMARITANA.

I

Would let them die, because,  
Francesca, you are going away from us.

FRANCESCA.

O beautiful, and perchance  
A holy thing, being born in this most ancient

Sarcophagus that was the sepulchre  
Perchance of some great martyr or of some  
Glorious virgin!

[*She walks round the sarcophagus, touching with  
her fingers the carvings on the four sides.*]

The Redeemer treads

Under his feet the lion and the snake;

Mary saluted by Elizabeth;

Our Lady, and the angel bids "All hail!"

The stags are drinking at the running brook.

[*She stretches out her arms towards the rose-tree.*]

And now the blood of martyrdom reflowers

In purple and in fire. Behold, behold,

Sister, the ardent flame,

Behold the roses that are full of fire!

Here did our own hands plant them, on a day,

It was October, on a day of battle

That crimsoned the red eagle of Polenta.

Do you remember? How the trumpets sounded

From Porta Gaza to the Torre Zancana,

As the new flag unfurled,

The flag our father

Had bid us make for him with forty yards

Of crimson cloth: it was a mighty flag-pole.

Do you remember?

And we had broidered round about the hem

A border fringe of gold.

It conquered! And from then

We held these roses

To be a blessed thing, we held them spotless

And undefiled as a white virginal robe;

And there was never plucked

One of these roses, and three springtides through

They blossomed into flower and fell to dust  
 In the sarcophagus.  
 But never have they flowered until this May,  
 Such floods, such floods of them.  
 There are a hundred. Look!  
 They burn me if I touch them.  
 The virgins vowed to Saint Apollinaris  
 Burn not with such an ardour in their heaven  
 Of gold. Samaritana,  
 Samaritana, which of them say you  
 Found here a sepulchre  
 After her glorious martyrdom? O, which  
 Of these was sepulchred  
 Here, tell me, here, after her martyrdom?  
 Look, look: it is the miracle of the blood!

SAMARITANA

[*Frightened, drawing her towards herself*].  
 Sister, what is it, sister?  
 You speak as if you raved.  
 What is it? Speak!

BIANCOFIORE.

[*From the loggia.*]      Madonna Francesca!

ADONELLA.

Madonna

Francesca!

FRANCESCA.

Who calls for me?

ADONELLA.

Come up here! O come quick!

ALDA.

Here, here, Madonna Francesca, come up here  
 And see!

ADONELLA.

Come quickly. It is your betrothed  
Who is passing.

BIANCOFIORE.

He is passing through the court,  
He is with your brother, Messer Ostasio;  
And here too is Ser Toldo Berardengo,  
The notary, he is with them.

ALDA.

Here, here! Madonna Francesca, come up  
quickly.

He is there, he is there!

[FRANCESCA goes hastily up the stairs. SAMARITANA is about to follow her, but stops, overcome.]

ADONELLA.

[Pointing him out to FRANCESCA who leans over  
to look.]

See, there is he who comes  
To be your husband.

GARSEDA.

O most happy lady,  
Most happy lady,  
He is the fairest knight in all the world,  
In very truth. See now  
How his hair falls, and waves about his shoulders  
In the new way, the Angevin way!

ALDA.

And how  
Well made he is, a proper man, well girded  
About the surcoat with the hanging sleeves  
That almost touch the ground.



ALDA.

And what a splendid clasp and what an aglet!

BIANCOFIORE.

And tall! And slender! And a royal carriage!

ADONELLA.

And how his teeth are white!

He smiled a little, and I saw them glitter.

Did you not see, did you

Not see?

GARSEMDA.

O, happy, happy shall she be

That kisses him on the mouth!

FRANCESCA.

Be silent.

ALDA.

He has gone. He is passing now

Under the portico.

[The SLAVE opens the grating, closes it furtively  
behind her, and disappears into the garden.]

FRANCESCA.

Be silent, be silent!

[She turns, covering her face with both her hands;  
when she withdraws them, her face appears  
transfigured. She goes down the first stairs  
slowly, then with a sudden rapidity throws  
herself into the arms of her sister, who receives  
her at the foot of the staircase.]

ALTICHIARA.

Messer Ostasio is coming back alone.

BIANCOFIORE.

The slave, where is she going? She is running  
Down through the garden.

GARSENDA.

Smaragdi runs and runs  
Like a hound unleashed. Where is she going?

ADONELLA.

Sing

Together, sing the song of the fair Isotta:

"O date, O leafy date! . . ."

[*The women form into a circle on the loggia.*]

CHORUS OF WOMEN.

O date, O leafy date,  
O love, O lovely love,  
What wilt thou do to me?

[FRANCESCA, held close in her sister's arms, suddenly begins to weep. The chorus breaks off.  
The WOMEN speak together in low voices.]

BIANCOFIORE.

Madonna weeps.

ADONELLA.

She weeps!

ALDA.

Why does she weep?

ALTICHIARA.

She weeps because her heart is sick with joy.

GARSENDA.

Straight to the heart  
He wounded her. If she is beautiful,  
He is beautiful, the Malatesta!

ADONELLA.

Born

One for the other  
Under one star.

GARSENDA.

O happy he and she!

ALDA.

Long may he live who crowns  
Their heads with garlands!

BIANCOFIORE.

*First rain of the season  
To the corn brings increase;  
And the first tears of love  
To the lover bring peace.*

ADONELLA.

She smiles, she smiles  
Now.

BIANCOFIORE.

And her tears  
Laugh like the hoar-frost.

GARSENDA.

Go, warm the bath,  
Get the combs ready.

*]The WOMEN scatter over the loggia, with their garments fluttering, nimble as birds on the bough, while the tall staves of their distaffs pass and repass, shaken like torches against the blue strip of the sky. Some go into the rooms and come out again. Others stand as if watching. And they talk in subdued*

*voices and they move without sound of foot-steps.]*

BIANCOFIORE.

These smelling-bottles  
Of bright new silver  
We have to fill  
With water of orange flower and water of roses.

ALDA.

We have to fill  
Four mighty coffers  
With sheets of linen fringed with silken lace.

ALTICHIARA.

And stores of pillows  
We have wrought for a marvel.  
We have wrought so many  
That never in dreams the people of Rimino  
Have seen such store!

ADONELLA.

Ah, we have much to be doing!

GARSENDA.

And we must fold the quilts  
Of cloth of linen  
And all the embroidered coverlets of gold.

BIANCOFIORE.

And count the nets and ribbons for the hair  
And all the girdles and the belts of gold.

ADONELLA.

We have much to be doing!

GARSENDA.

I take my oath  
A better dowry brings to Malatesta

The daughter of Messer Guido than the daughter  
Of Boemondo, King of Servia,  
To the Doge of Venice.

ADONELLA.

And if she go by sea we have store enough  
Of oil and lavender  
To perfume all the sea.

ALDA.

And we will teach the women.  
Of Rimino, that are a little raw,  
The art of odours.

BIANCOFIORE

And the art of playing.  
And of singing and of dancing.

ALTICHIARA.

O, I forgot  
That I have yet to put a patch of scarlet  
On the jerkin of Gian Figo.  
He comes again at noonday.

BIANCOFIORE.

He will do well to finish  
The story of Morgana and the shield,  
And of the magic potion.

ALDA.

Hey, hey, the wedding in May!  
The table must be laid for thirty dishes  
And for a hundred trenchers.

BIANCOFIORE.

We must bring word  
To Mazarello  
To have the music ready.

ADONELLA.

Ah, we have much to be doing!

GARSEDA.

Hey, hey, to work, to work!

ADONELLA.

Come, lay our distaffs down  
And take our garlands up.

[*They go into the room with a murmur, like a swarm of bees into the hive. FRANCESCA has raised her head, and her tears are suddenly lit up by a smile. While the WOMEN on the loggia were chattering in a low voice among themselves, she wiped the tears from her face and the face of her sister with her fingers. Now she speaks, and her first words are heard through the last words of the WOMEN.*]

FRANCESCA.

O sister, sister,  
Weep no more. Now I weep no more. See  
now,  
I am smiling. Tears and smiles  
Are not enough now. Close  
And narrow is the heart to hold this power,  
And weeping is a virtue all outspent,  
And laughter is a little idle play;  
And all my life seems now,  
With all the veins of it,  
And all the days of it,  
And all old things in it, far away things,  
From long ago in the old time, the blind  
And silent time, when I  
Was but an infant on my mother's breast,

And you were not,  
Seems all to tremble  
In one long shuddering  
Over the earth;  
And now through all the streams  
That laugh and weep in the places  
That I have never known,  
The forces of my being are cast abroad;  
And I hear the air cry with a terrible cry,  
And I hear the light  
Sound like a trumpet-peal,  
And the shouting that I hear  
And the tumult cry out louder than the sound  
In days of vengeance, sister, when the blood  
Colours the portals of our father's house.

SAMARITANA.

O Francesca, my Francesca, O dear soul,  
What have you seen? What is it you have seen?

FRANCESCA.

No, do not be afraid!  
What is it your eyes speak?  
What sickness am I stricken with, and what,  
What have I seen?  
It is life runs away,  
Runs away like a river,  
Ravening, and yet cannot find its sea;  
And the roar is in my ears.  
But you, but you,  
Take me, dear sister, take me with you now,  
And let me be with you!  
Carry me to my room,  
And shut the shutters fast.  
And give me a little shade,

And give me a draught of water,  
 And lay me down upon your little bed,  
 And with a covering cover me and make  
 A silence of the shouting, make a silence  
 Of the shouting and the tumult  
 I hear within my soul!  
 Bring stillness back to me,  
 That I may hear again  
 The bees of May  
 Beat on the window, and the cry of the swallows,  
 And some of your soft words,  
 Your words of yesterday,  
 Your words of long ago  
 And long ago,  
 Out of an hour that comes to me again  
 Like an enchantment.  
 And hold me close, dear sister,  
 And hold me close to you!  
 And we will wait for night  
 Night with its prayer and sleep,  
 Sister; and for the morning we will wait  
 That brings that morning-star.

## GARSEMDA

*[rushing in upon the loggia].*

He is coming, he is coming! O Madonna  
 Francesca! see, he is coming by the way  
 Of the garden. I have seen him from the room  
 Of the coffers, I have seen him  
 Under the cypresses. Smaragdi shows him  
 The way.

*[The other WOMEN join her, curious and mirthful;  
 and they have garlands on their heads for  
 joy: and they have with them three GIRLS,*



*lute-players and viol-players and flute-players.]*

FRANCESCA

*[white with fear, and beside herself].*

No, no, no! Run,  
Run, women, run!  
Let him not come! Run, run!  
Women, go out to meet him,  
Let him not come! Shut to  
The gates, and bar the way, and say to him  
Merely that I salute him! and you, you,  
Samaritana, help me,  
Because I cannot fly; but my knees fail  
And my sight fails me.  
But you, my women, run,  
Run now, and meet him,  
And bid him turn again! Go out to meet him,  
And say that I salute him!

THE WOMEN.

He is here!

He is here, he is here at hand!

*[Aided by her sister, FRANCESCA is about to go up the stairs; but suddenly she sees PAOLO MALATESTA, close to her, on the other side of the marble screen. She stands motionless, and he stops, in the midst of the arbutuses; and they stand facing one another, separated by the railing, looking at one another, without word or movement. The SLAVE is hidden behind the leaves. The WOMEN on the loggia form in a circle, and the PLAYERS sound their instruments.]*

## CHORUS OF WOMEN.

*Over the land of May  
The archer with his band  
Goes out to seek his prey.  
At a feast of fears,  
In a far-off land,  
A heart sighs with tears.*

[FRANCESCA leaves her sister and goes slowly towards the sarcophagus. She picks a large redrose, and offers it to PAOLO MALATESTA across the bars. SAMARITANA with bowed head goes up the stairs weeping. The women take up the song. At the barred window, at the back, BANNINO appears, with his face bandaged; then drawing back, he beats at the door closed by OSTASIO. FRANCESCA trembles.]

## THE VOICE OF BANNINO.

Francesca, open, Francesca!



Francesco Annunzio

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## ACT II.

*A cross-shaped room, in the house of the Malatesti, with projecting side beams and strong pillars, two of which, at the back, support an arch which leads through a narrow closed entrance between two walls pierced by loopholes, to the platform of a round tower. Two side staircases of twelve steps run from the entrance to the leads of the tower; a third staircase, between the two, runs from the leads to the floor underneath, passing through a trap-door. Through the archway are seen the square battlements of the Guelfs, provided with blockhouses and openings for pouring down molten lead. A huge catapult lifts its head out of its supports and stretches out its framework of twisted ropes. Heavy crossbows, with large-headed, short, and square bolts, balistas, arco-balistas, and other rope-artillery, are placed around, with their cranks, pullies, wheels, wires, and levers. The summit of the tower, crowned with engines and arms that stand out in the murky air, overlooks the city of Rimini, where can be dimly seen the wing-shaped battlements of the highest Ghibelline tower. On the right of the room is a door; on the left, a narrow fortified window looking out on the Adriatic.*

*In the closed entrance is seen a MAN-AT-ARMS stirring the fire under a smoking cauldron. He has piled against the wall the tubes, syphons and poles of the fiery staves and darts, and heaped about them all sorts of prepared fires. On the tower, beside the catapult, a young ARCHER stands on guard.*

MAN-AT-ARMS.

The meadow of the Commune is still empty?

ARCHER.

As clean and polished as my buckler.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Still

Not a soul stirring!

ARCHER.

Not the shadow even

Of a Gambancerro or of an Omodeo.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

They seem then to be dead already, those  
That have to die.

ARCHER.

Quite otherwise than dead!

If all we did not buckle breastplates well,  
And if the gates were not cross-bolted fast,  
You would soon hear a hammering of hearts  
In the regions about Rimino. . . . Ah, there goes  
A donkey.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

It is Messer Montagna, eh?

Of the Parcitadi, or Messer Ugolino  
Cignatta.

ARCHER.

Both of them, my Berlingerio,

Stand with the right foot ready  
In the stirrup of the crossbow, for the sign  
To come out and to face the bolts and bars.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

What sign? The Parcitade  
Lacks his astrologer. He waits and hopes  
For succour from Urbino.  
But long before Count Guido comes to us,  
By the body of San Giulian the martyr,  
We shall have burnt the city to the ground.  
We have enough to do with burning down  
Half of Romagna. 'Tis warm work this time,  
I warrant you! The Lamester  
Wanted to singe his horse's mane with one  
Of these fire-bearers:  
Sure sign we are in salamander weather.

ARCHER.

He loves the stench of singeing, it would seem,  
More than the civet of his wedded wife,  
That woman of Ravenna! another thing  
Than firebrands or this sulphur and bitumen!  
A smile of hers would set the city alight  
And all the country and the territory.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

She smiles but little. She is always overcast  
With thinking, and with anger. She is restless.  
I see her almost every day come up  
Upon this tower. She scarcely speaks. She  
watches

The sea, and if she sees  
Some galley or some frigate on the sea,  
She follows it with her eyes  
(Blacker than pitch, her eyes !)

Until it fades away,  
As if she waited for a message or  
Longed to set sail. She goes  
From tower to tower,  
From the Mastra to the Rubbia,  
And from the Gemmana to the Tanaglia,  
Like a lost swallow. And sometimes I fear,  
When she is on the platform,  
That she will take a flying leap and fall.  
Misericordia!

ARCHER.

The Lamester is well made  
To ride astride upon the Omodeo,  
To batter strongholds, and to ford the streams,  
And to force palisades,  
To plunder and to pillage all the earth,  
But not to labour in the lovely vineyard  
That God has given him.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Hush! You must not speak  
So loud; we should not hear him if he came.  
He goes about more softly than a panther,  
You cannot hear him when he comes. He makes  
A goodly pair with Messer Malatestino,  
That comes upon you always suddenly  
Without your knowing how or whence he came,  
And gives you the same start,  
Always, as if you had come upon a ghost.

ARCHER.

This is the day we are to lay about us.  
The women will be all shut up.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

This one



Is not a lady to be frightened. Look,  
See what is stirring.

ARCHER

*[returning to his post].*

I see the friars,  
The hermits of Sant' Agostino, pass  
To the exorcising. I can smell the stench  
Of singeing in the cool air.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

And the gate  
Of the Gattalo is closed still?

ARCHER.

Ay, closed still.  
Our men, that had to come Verrucchio way,  
Will be by now with trumpets and flags flying  
At the bridge of the Maone. Messer Paolo  
Came with the infantry by the postern gate  
Of the sea.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

The mixture now  
Is ready brewed. Since midday I have stirred  
The ladle, mixed and moulded it together.  
We are to sling barrels and casks of it  
Upon the excommunicated houses.  
But what is it we wait for? The conjunction  
Of Mars with Venus? This astrologer,  
Come from Baldach, does not quite seem to me  
A modern Balaam. God be on our side!  
Look if you see him now  
Upon the belfry of Santa Colomba.  
He is to ring the bell three times, to say  
The fates are in our favour.

ARCHER.

I can see

A great long beard.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

May he be tarred all over with his tow,  
And brayed into a mortar! I suspect him.  
He was with Ezelino at Padua,  
And other of hell's own Ghibellines. I know not  
Why Messer Malatesta  
Keeps in his company.

ARCHER.

Guido Bonatto, of Forlì, I know  
To be a true astrologer of battles.  
I saw him on the great day of Valbona,  
And his prognostic never faulted.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Now

The cursed Feltran has him. Thunder strike  
His eyesight and his astrolabe!

[FRANCESCA enters by the door on the right, and  
advances as far as the pillar that supports  
the arch. She wears about her face a dark  
band that passes under her chin and joins  
a kind of skull-cap that covers her hair, leav-  
ing visible the tresses knotted on her neck.]

ARCHER.

The dust  
Begins to rise over toward Aguzano.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Are they Count Guido's horsemen  
That ought to come from Petramala?

ARCHER.

No.

May God cast down their eyes  
Out of their visors into the dust!

MAN-AT-ARMS.

But who,

Who are they?

FRANCESCA.

Berlingerio!

MAN-AT-ARMS

[starting].

O, Madonna Francesca!

[The ARCHER remains silent and stares at her  
blankly, leaning on the catapult.]

FRANCESCA.

Messer Giovanni

Is at the Mastra yet?

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Not yet, Madonna. We expect him now.

FRANCESCA.

And no one else?

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Yes, Messer Malatesta,

The old man. He himself it was who made  
The mixing in the cauldron; and I am here  
Since midday with this ladle, stirring it.

FRANCESCA

[going nearer].

And no one else?

MAN-AT-ARMS.

And no one else, Madonna.

FRANCESCA.

What are you doing here?

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Making Greek fire,  
Distaffs and staves and spouts and lines and pots  
And fiery darts, and much  
Other caresses for the Parcitadi,  
Because we trust to come to blows to-day  
And give them from this quarter what shall prove  
A good part-payment of their coming hell.

FRANCESCA.

*(Looking wonderingly at the boiling mass in the  
cauldron)*

Greek fire! Who can escape it? I have never  
Seen it before. Tell me, is it not true  
That there is nothing known so terrible  
In battles for a torture?

MAN-AT-ARMS

This is indeed most terrible; 'tis a secret  
That Messer Malatesta  
Had from an aged man of Pisa, who  
Was with the Christians at the famous taking  
Of Damiata.

FRANCESCA.

Tell me, is it true

That it flames in the sea,  
Flames in the stream,  
Burns up the ships,  
Burns down the towers,  
Stifles and sickens,  
Drains a man's blood in his veins,  
Straightway, and makes

Of his flesh and his bones  
A little black ashes,  
Draws from the anguish  
Of man the wild cry of the beast,  
That it maddens the horse,  
Turns the valiant to stone?  
Is it true that it shatters  
The rock, and consumes  
Iron, and bites  
Hard to the heart  
Of a breastplate of diamond?

MAN-AT-ARMS.

It bites and eats  
All kinds of things that are, living and dead;  
Sand only chokes it out,  
But also vinegar  
Slacks it.

FRANCESCA.

But how do you  
Dare, then, to handle it?

MAN-AT-ARMS.

We have the license  
Of Beezeleubub, that is the prince of devils,  
And comes to take the part  
Of the Malatesti.

FRANCESCA.

How do you scatter it?

MAN-AT-ARMS.

With tubes and syphons  
Of a long range; or at the point of pikes  
With distaffs full of flax  
We shoot it by the help of our balistas.

See here, Madonna, these are very good  
 Distaffs; they are  
 The distaffs of the Guelfs  
 That without spindle weave the death of men.

*[He takes up a staff prepared for the fire and  
 shows it to FRANCESCA, who takes it by the  
 handle and shakes it vehemently.]*

FRANCESCA.

Light one for me.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

The signal is not yet

Given.

FRANCESCA.

I would have you light this one for me.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Who is to put it out?

FRANCESCA.

O, I must see

The flame that I have never seen as yet.  
 Light it! Is it not true that when you light it  
 It darts marvellous colours, like no other  
 Creature of flight,  
 Colours of such a mingling that the eye  
 Cannot endure them,  
 Of an unspeakable  
 Variety, innumerable  
 In fervour and in splendour, that alone  
 Live in the wandering planets and within  
 The vials of alchemists;  
 And in volcanoes full of many metals,  
 And in the dreams of blind men? Is it true?

MAN-AT-ARMS.

In very deed, Madonna,  
It is a beautiful and pleasant thing  
To see at night these lighted distaffs fly  
And light upon a camp  
Of the imperial ragamuffianry;  
And that knows well Messer Giovanni, your  
Good husband, who takes pleasure to behold it.

FRANCESCA.

Light it, then, man-at-arms! for I must see it.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

'Tis not yet night, nor is the signal given.

FRANCESCA.

Light it! I bid you.  
And I will hide myself here in the dark  
To see it, by the stairway leading down,  
Where it is darker.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Do you want to burn

The tower with all the archers,  
And please the Parcitade folk?

[FRANCESCA dips the fiery staff into the cauldron, then rapidly lights it with a fire-brand.]

FRANCESCA.

And I

Light it!

[The violent and many-coloured flame crackles  
at the point of the pike that she holds in her  
hand like a torch, fearlessly].

O, fair flame, conqueror of day!  
Ah, how it lives, how it lives vibrating,

The whole staff vibrates with it, and my hand  
And my arm vibrate with it, and my heart.  
I feel it nearer me  
Than if I held it in my palm. Wouldst thou  
Devour me, fair flame, wouldst thou make me  
thine?

I feel that I am maddening for thee.

*(Her voice rises like a song. The MAN-AT-  
ARMS and the ARCHER gaze in astonish-  
ment at the flame and the woman, as at some  
work of sorcery).*

And how it roars!

It roars to seek its prey.

It roars and longs for flight;

And I would fling it up into the clouds.

Come, charge the arbalest.

The sun is dead, and this,

This is the daughter that he had of death.

O I would fling it up into the clouds.

Why do you linger? No, I am not mad,

No, no, poor man-at-arms, who look at me

In wonderment.

*[She laughs.]*

No, but this flame is so

Beautiful, I am drunk with it. I feel

As I were in the flame and it in me.

You, you, do you not see how beautiful,

How beautiful it is? The bitter smoke

Has spoilt your eyes for seeing. If it shines

So gloriously by day, how will it shine

By night?

*[She approaches the trap-door through which the  
stairs go down into the tower, and lowers*



*the burning staff into the darkness.]*

A miracle! A miracle!

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Madonna, God preserve us, you will burn

The whole tower down.

Madonna, I pray you!

*[He hastily draws back out of the way of sparks  
the staves prepared for fire which are lying  
about].*

FRANCESCA

*[Intent on the light].*

It is a miracle!

It is the joy of the eyes, and the desire  
Of splendour and destruction. In the heart  
Of silence of this high and lonely mount  
Shall I spread forth these gems of frozen fire,  
That all the terror of the flame unloose  
And bring to birth new ardours in the soul?  
Tremendous life of swiftness, mortal beauty!  
Swift through the night, swift through the  
starless night,

Fall in the camp, and seize the armed man,  
Enswathe his sounding armour, glide between  
Strong scale and scale, hunt down  
The life of veins, and break  
The bones asunder, suck the marrow out,  
Stifle him, rend him, blind him, but before  
The final darkness falls upon his eyes,  
Let all the soul within him without hope  
Shriek in the splendour that is slaying him.

*[She listens in the direction of the trap-door.]*

Some one is coming up the stairs here. Who  
Is coming?

## MAN-AT-ARMS

On each floor

We have a hundred men,  
Archers and those that work the manganel, s  
Hidden, and bidden not to move or breathe,  
Crammed in together like a sheaf of arrows  
Inside a quiver. Perhaps  
They saw the flame.

## FRANCESCA.

It is one man alone.

His armour clanks upon him.  
Who is it coming?

## MAN-AT-ARMS.

Lift up the staff, turn it away, Madonna  
Francesca, it is surely not an enemy,  
Or you are like to burn him in the face.  
Perhaps it is Messer Giovanni.

## FRANCESCA

[*bending over the opening*].

Who are you?

Who are you?

## THE VOICE OF PAOLO.

Paolo!

[FRANCESCA is silent; she draws back the fiery  
staff, and the flame, heightened by the sud-  
den movement, lights up the helmet and gor-  
gerin of PAOLO MALATESTA.]

PAOLO appears, up to the waist, in the opening  
of the stairs, and turns to FRANCESCA who  
has moved back against the wall, still hold-  
ing in her hand the iron handle of the staff,  
which she has lowered to the ground, so that

*the fire burns perilously near her feet. The ARCHER has returned to his post.]*

MAN-AT-ARMS.

You have come just in time, Messer Paolo, just  
In time, for all we here  
Were like to have been roasted living, we  
And all the towers along with us. You see:  
Madonna plays  
With the Greek fire  
As if she held  
A lap-dog in a leash.

*[FRANCESCA, pale and leaning against the wall,  
laughs with a troubled laugh, letting the  
staff fall from her hand.]*

It is a miracle

That we are not all here in open hell.  
You see!

*[He pours sand on the flame in order to extin-  
guish it. PAOLO runs up the remaining  
steps; as he sets foot on the platform of the  
tower, the ARCHER points towards the city,  
to show where the battle is beginning.]*

ARCHER.

There is tumult in the San Cataldo quarter.  
It is breaking out at the Membruto bridge  
Over the Patara trench.  
And they are fighting at the fullers' mill  
Under the gun tower, there, by the Masdogna.

*[FRANCESCA moves away, stepping uncertainly  
among the arrows and engines heaped  
around, and goes towards the door by which  
she had come; she pauses by the pillar that  
hides her from the eyes of PAOLO].*

## MAN-AT-ARMS.

We are still waiting  
For the signal, Messer Paolo.  
It is almost vespers. What are we to do?

[*PAOLO does not seem to hear, possessed by a single thought, a single anguish. Seeing FRANCESCA has gone, he leaves the tower, and goes down one of the little side staircases to rejoin her.*]

PAOLO.

Francesca!

FRANCESCA.

Give the signal. Paolo, give  
The signal! Do not fear  
For me, Paolo. Let me stay here and hear  
The twanging of the bows.  
I cannot breathe  
When I am shut into my room, among  
My trembling women, and I know there is fight-  
ing  
Out in the city. I would have you give me,  
My lord and kinsman, a fair helmet.

PAOLO.

I

Will give you one.

FRANCESCA.

Have you come from Cesena?

PAOLO.

I came to-day.

FRANCESCA.

You stayed

A long while there.

PAOLO.

It took us forty days  
With Guido di Monforte in the field  
To take Cesena and the castle.

FRANCESCA.

Ah!

You have toiled, I think, too much.  
You are a little thinner and a little  
Paler, it seems to me.

PAOLO.

There is an Autumn fever  
Among the thickets on the Savio.

FRANCESCA.

No,

But you are sick? You tremble. And Orabile,  
Has she no medicine for you?

PAOLO.

This fever

Feeds on itself; I ask no medicine,  
I seek no herb to heal my sickness, sister.

FRANCESCA.

I had a healing herb  
When I was in my father's house, the house  
Of my good father, God protect him, God  
Protect him! I had a herb, a healing herb,  
There in the garden where you came one day  
Clothed in a garment that is called, I think,  
Fraud, in the gentle world;  
But you set foot on it, and saw it not,  
And it has never come up any more,  
However light your foot may be, my lord  
And kinsman. It was dead.

PAOLO.

I saw it not,

I knew not where I was,  
Nor who had led my feet into that way,  
I did not speak, I did not hear a word,  
I had no bounds to cross,  
No barriers to break down,  
I only saw a rose  
That offered itself up to me more living  
Than the lips of a fresh wound, and a young  
    song  
I heard in the air, and I heard angry blows  
Beaten upon a loud and terrible door,  
And I heard an angry voice that cried your name  
In anger. Only that, nothing but that.  
Nor from that way did I come back by will  
Of coming back;  
Because the ways of death  
Are not so secret as that other way,  
O sister, if God wills.

FRANCESCA.

I also saw

With my own eyes the dawn,  
The dawn that brings with it the morning star,  
The nurse of the young heavens,  
That had but newly waked to give its milk  
When the last dream of sleep  
Came to my pillow; and I also saw,  
With my own eyes I saw,  
With horror and with shame,  
About me as it were an impure stream  
Of water flung suddenly outraging  
A palpitating face

Lifted to drink the light.  
This did I see with my own eyes; and this  
I shall see always till the night has fallen,  
The night that has no dawn,  
Brother.

PAOLO.

The shame and horror be on me !  
The light that came again  
Found me awake.  
Peace had forever fled  
Out of the soul of Paolo Malatesta;  
It has not come again, it will not come  
Ever again;  
Peace and the soul of Paolo Malatesta  
Are enemies from now in life or death.  
And all things were as enemies to me  
From the hour that you set foot  
Upon the threshold, and without escape,  
And I turned back and followed with the guide.  
Violent deeds  
Were the one medicine for my disease,  
That night: violent deeds.  
And then I killed Tindaro Omodei  
And burned his roofs about him.  
I gave to the harsh guide another prey.

FRANCESCA.

God shall forgive you this,  
God shall forgive you all the blood you shed,  
And all the rest,  
But not the tears I did not weep, but not  
The eyes that were still dry when the dawn came.  
I cannot weep now, brother! Another draught  
You gave me at the ford

Of the beautiful river, do you remember it?  
With your false heart,  
Filled full with madness and with treachery,  
That was the last, that was the last that quenched  
My thirst; and now no water  
Can quench my thirst, not any more, my lord.  
And then we saw the walls of Rimino,  
And then we saw the Galeana gate,  
And the sun was going down upon the hills,  
And all the horses neighed against the walls,  
And then I saw your face,  
Silent, between the spears  
Of the horsemen. And a wicked thing it was  
That you did not let me drift upon the stream,  
That would have taken me and laid me down  
Softly upon the seashore of Ravenna,  
And some one would have found me, and brought  
me back  
To my good father, to my most kind father  
That without thought of wrong had given me  
To whom he would, yes, without thought of  
wrong;  
God have him in his keeping, give him always  
More and more lordship!

PAOLO.

Your rebuke, Francesca,  
Is cruel over-much, sweet over-much,  
And my heart melts within me, and my sad soul  
Is shed before the strangeness of your voice.  
My soul is shed before you,  
All that is in me have I cast away,  
And I will no more stoop to pick it up.  
How would you have me die?



FRANCESCA.

Like to the galley-slave  
Rowing in the galley that is called Despair,  
So would I have you die; and there and then  
The memory of that draught  
You gave me at the ford  
Of the beautiful river,  
Before we had come to the water of treachery  
And to the walls of fraud, should burn in you  
And should consume you. My brother in God,  
In the Most High God,  
And in Saint John, better it were for you  
That you should lose your life than stain your  
soul.

*[The bells of Santa Colomba are heard. Both  
shiver as if returning to consciousness.]*

Ah! where are we? Who is it calling us?  
Paolo, what hour is that?  
What are you doing?

*[The MAN-AT-ARMS and the ARCHER, busy  
loading the balistas and cocking the fiery  
staves, start at the sound.]*

MAN-AT-ARMS.

The signal! It is the signal!  
It is the bells of Santa Colomba!

ARCHER.

Fire!

Fire! Long live Malatesta!

*[A TROOP OF ARCHERS hurry shouting up  
through the trap-door, and through the  
platform of the tower, and seize weapons  
and engines.]*

ARCHERS.

Long live Messer Malatesta and the Guelfs!  
Down with Messer Parcitade and the Ghibel-  
lines!

[*On the battlements is a great sheaf of fiery  
staves, which glows in the dusky air. PAOLO  
MALATESTA takes his helmet from his head  
and gives it to FRANCESCA.*]

PAOLO.

Here is the helmet that I have to give you.

FRANCESCA.

Paolo!

[*PAOLO rushes upon the tower. His bare head  
overtops the MEN-AT-ARMS as they work.  
FRANCESCA, throwing down the helmet,  
follows, calling to him through the noise  
and clamour.*]

PAOLO.

Give me a crossbow!

FRANCESCA.

Paolo! Paolo!

PAOLO.

A bow! A crossbow!

FRANCESCA.

Paolo! Paolo!

[*An ARCHER is knocked over by a bolt which  
takes him in the throat.*]

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Madonna, get you gone, for God's sake; now  
They are beginning here to bite the leads.

[Some ARCHERS raise their large painted shields  
in the way of FRANCESCA as she tries to  
follow PAOLO.]

ARCHERS.

The Galeana Tower is answering!  
Cignatta's men are coming  
By the Masdogna!  
Long live Messer Malatesta and the Guelfs!  
Verrucchio! Verrucchio!  
[FRANCESCA tries to get past the ARCHERS,  
who stop her way.]

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Madonna,  
By any God you worship! Messer Paolo,  
Pay a little heed here! Here is Madonna Fran-  
cesca  
Out in the open. It is death here.  
[PAOLO, snatching a crossbow, stands on the  
rampart, firing furiously, in full view of  
the enemy, like a madman.]

FRANCESCA.

Paolo!

[PAOLO turns at the cry, and sees the woman in  
the glare of the fires. He snatches a shield  
from one of the ARCHERS and covers her.]

PAOLO.

Ah, Francesca, go, go! What is this madness?  
[He pushes her toward shelter, holding the  
shield over her; she gazes at his angry and  
beautiful face from under the shield.]

FRANCESCA.

You  
Are the madman! You are the madman!

PAOLO.

And was I not to die?

[*He leads her back to shelter and throws down  
the shield, still holding the crossbow.*]

FRANCESCA.

Not now, not now,

It is not yet the hour.

ARCHERS.

—Malatesta! Malatesta!

—Cignatta's men are there, under the Rubbia!

—This side, this side!

[*They come down by the stairs on the left and  
set the crossbows to the arrow-slits in the  
walls. The bells ring in all directions. A  
distant sound of trumpets is heard.*]

—Verruchio! Down with the Parcitade! Death  
To the Ghibelline!

—Long live Messer Malatesta!

Long live the Guelfs!

PAOLO.

This is the hour, if you will see me die,  
If you will lift my head out of the dust  
With your two hands. What other could I have?  
I will not die the death of the galley-slave.

FRANCESCA.

Paolo, steel your heart against your fate,  
Be silent as that day  
Under the heavy guidance, as that day  
Among the spears of the spearmen. And let  
me not  
Stain my own soul for your sake!

PAOLO.

Ay, to play

With fate is what I will,  
Is what my false heart wills,  
Filled full of madness and of treachery.

[*With an impetuous gesture he draws her towards  
the fortified window, and puts into her hand  
the cord that hangs from the portcullis.*]

Throw the portcullis open!

A child's hand opens it,

The mere touch of an innocent hand.

[*He gathers a bundle of arrows and throws them  
at the feet of FRANCESCA. Then he loads  
the crossbow.*]

FRANCESCA.

Ah, madman!

Madman! And do you think  
My hand will tremble? Do you think to tempt  
My soul after this fashion? I am ready  
For any mortal game men play with fate,  
Knowing I shall not lose,  
Seeing that all is lost.  
But you now stand  
Upon tremendous limits, where God help you!  
I open for you. See!  
Look straight before you,  
And take the sign, if you would not have me  
laugh.

[*She pulls the portcullis open with the cord, and  
through the opening is seen the open sea,  
shining under the last rays of light.*]

The sea! The sea!

[*PAOLO aims the crossbow and fires.*]

PAOLO.

A good stroke! It is gone  
Through neck and neckpiece.  
That's my good forerunner  
In the land of darkness!

[FRANCESCA *lowers the portcullis, and the return arrow is heard against it.* PAOLO *re-loads the crossbow.*]

ARCHERS

[*On the tower.*]

—Victory!

Victory! Death, death to the Parcitadi!  
Long live Messer Malatesta and the Guelfs!  
—Victory! Victory! the Ghibelline is broken  
At the Patara bridge.  
—The fuller's mill is empty!  
—Messer Giovanni galloping with the spears  
At the Gattolo gate! Cignatta scampering!  
—Be careful not to wound  
Our own folk in the fray!  
—Victory to Malatesta!

FRANCESCA

[*In great emotion.*]

I have seen the sea,  
The eternal sea,  
The witness of the Lord,  
And on the sea a sail  
That the Lord set to be a sign of saving.  
Paolo, brother in God,  
I make a vow  
If the Lord of mercy  
Have you in keeping!

PAOLO.

Raise the portcullis up!

FRANCESCA

I will not let it down again. This hazard  
Shall be God's judgment, this judgment of the  
arrow.

Man is deceit, but God is very truth.  
Brother in God, the stain of fraud you have  
Upon your soul,  
Let it be pardoned to you with all love,  
And let the judgment of God  
Make proof of you  
Now by the arrow  
That it touch you not;  
Or it were better  
That you give your life,  
And I with you.

*[Holding the tightened cord in her hand she kneels and prays, with her wide-open eyes fixed on PAOLO's unarmed head. Through the raised portcullis can be seen the shining sea. PAOLO loads and fires the crossbow without a pause. From time to time Ghibelline missiles enter by the window and strike on the opposite wall or fall on the pavement without wounding him. The cruel suspense convulses the face of the woman in prayer. The syllables hardly form themselves on her parted lips.]*

Our Father which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name,  
Thy Kingdom come,  
Thy will be done in earth

As it is in heaven.  
Father, give us this day  
Our daily bread.

[PAOLA, having failed in several shots, takes  
aim more carefully, as if for a master-stroke.  
He fires; a clamour is heard among the  
enemy.]

PAOLO

[With fierce delight].

Ah, Ugolino, I have found you out!

FRANCESCA.

And forgive us our debts, as we  
Forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not  
Into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
So be it, Amen.

[Meanwhile there is great rejoicing among the  
ARCHERS on the tower. Some carry the  
killed and wounded down through the trap-  
door.]

ARCHERS.

—Victory to Malatesta!  
—Death to the Parcitadi and the Ghibellines!  
Montagna's men are flying  
By the San Cataldo gate.—See, see, the fire  
Is spreading. There's a powder-barrel burst  
Over the house of Accarisio. See,  
The fire is spreading! —Victory! Malatesta!  
—Ah, Messer Ugolino  
Cignatta has fallen from his horse. He is dead!



—A bolt from a crossbow took him in the mouth.

Who was it killed him? Was it Bartolo Gambitta?

—Who, who killed him? One of ours?  
A splendid stroke!

—Deserves a hundred lire,  
A thousand golden crowns!—Victory! Victory!

[A shaft grazes the head of PAOLO MALATESTA, passing through his hair. FRANCESCA utters a cry, letting go the cord; starting to her feet, she takes his head in her hands, feeling for the wound. A mortal pallor overspreads his face at the touch. The crossbow falls at his feet.]

FRANCESCA.

Paolo! Paolo!

[She looks at her hands to see if they are stained with blood. They are white. She again searches anxiously.]

O, what is this? Oh, God!

Paolo! Paolo! You are not bleeding, and you have

No single drop of blood upon your head,  
Yet you look deathly. Paolo!

PAOLO

[In a choking voice].

I am not dying,

Francesca. Iron has not touched me.

FRANCESCA.

Saved!

O saved and pure! Cleansed utterly of fraud!  
Give thanks to God! Kneel, brother!

PAOLO.

But your hands  
Have touched me, and the soul  
Has fainted in my heart, and icy cold  
Takes hold on all my veins, and no more strength  
Is in me now to live;  
But of this other life  
That comes to meet me—

FRANCESCA.

Kneel, kneel, on your life!

PAOLO.

Ah! an unspeakable fear takes hold on me,  
And a scorn deeper even than the fear—

FRANCESCA.

Kneel! Kneel!

PAOLO.

Since I have lived  
With such an infinite force,  
Fighting apart, yet ever on the lonely  
Height of your prayer,  
And in the fiery solitude of your eyes—

FRANCESCA.

Kneel! Kneel! Give thanks to God!  
I will not lose you now over again!

PAOLO.

Fighting apart, and slaying  
Men—

FRANCESCA.

You are pardoned now,  
And you are cleansed, and yet you will be lost!

PAOLO.

And all my courage drawn  
Vehemently about my angry heart,

And all within me now  
The power of my most evil love sealed up.

FRANCESCA.

Lost! Lost! Say you are mad,  
Say, on your life, that you are mad, and say  
That your most wretched soul  
Has heard no word of all your mouth has said!  
By the arrow that passed by  
And struck you not,  
By the death that touched you with its finger-tip  
And took you not,  
Say that your life shall never, never speak  
Those words again!

ARCHERS.

Long live Messer Giovanni Malatesta!

[GIOVANNI MALATESTA comes up by the stairs  
of the Mastra Tower, armed from head to  
foot, and holding a Sardinian rod in his  
hand. He limps up the stairs, and, when he  
has reached the top, raises his terrible spear,  
while his harsh voice cuts through the  
clamour.]

GIANCIOTTO.

By God, you craven creatures,  
You cut-throat spawn,  
I am well minded  
To pitch you all headlong into the Ausa,  
Like carrion that you are.

FRANCESCA.

Your brother!

[PAOLO picks up the crossbow].

GIANCIOTTO.

You are more ready

To cry rejoicings  
Than to belabour this tough Ghibelline hide.  
How should you work your crossbows without  
sinews?

Had I not come to aid you with my horse,  
Cignatta would have battered down your gates;  
God break the arms of all of you for cowards!

ARCHERS.

—We had used almost all our stock of arrows.  
—The Astrologer was late in signalling.  
—We have silenced them on the Galassa tower.  
—We have piled up a heap on the Masdogna.

GIANCIOTTO.

Poor fire, by God! There are not many houses  
To be seen burning. Badly thrown, your fire.

ARCHERS.

—The house of Accarisio is still burning.  
—And the good Cignatta, who unhorsed him  
then?  
—It was one of us that slit his windpipe for him?

GIANCIOTTO.

Which one of you was standing at the window?

ARCHERS.

—Was not this one here something of the cut?  
A thousand golden crowns to the company!

GIANCIOTTO.

Who was it at the window?

.

ARCHERS.

—We have been slaving on an empty stomach.

—We are dead with hunger and with thirst.

—Long live

Messer Gianciotto the never-satisfied!

[PAOLO picks up his helmet, puts it on and goes towards the tower. FRANCESCA goes towards the door by which she had entered, opens it and calls.]

FRANCESCA.

O Smaragdi! Smaragdi!

GIANCIOTTO

[To the ARCHERS].

Be silent there. Your tongues dry up in you!  
No talking while you work: I like you silent.  
But come now, there is a great cask to hurl;  
I will teach you the right way of it; and I will  
send it

To the old Parcitade for leave-taking  
In my good father's name. Here, Berlingerio,  
Where is my brother Paolo?  
Did he not come up here?

[The SLAVE appears at the door; then, after an order from her mistress, disappears. FRANCESCA remains standing on the threshold.]

PAOLO.

Here. I am here, Gianciotto. It was I  
Who shot out of the window. The dumb thing  
Struck through the throat of one whose mouth  
was open  
To jest at you.

[There is a murmur among the ARCHERS.]

GIANCIOTTO.

Brother, much thanks for this.

[*He turns to the MEN-AT-ARMS.*]

So sure a shot must needs

Come from a Malatesta,

My braggart bowmen.

[*The SLAVE reappears with a jar and a cup.*FRANCESCA comes forward. GIANCIOTTO  
comes down towards his brother.]

Paolo, I bring you news,

Good news.

[*He sees his wife. His voice changes to a gentler  
tone.*]

Francesca!

FRANCESCA.

All hail, my lord; you bring the victory.

[*He goes up to her and embraces her.*]

GIANCIOTTO.

Dear lady, why are you in such a place.

[*She draws back from the embrace.*]

FRANCESCA.

You have blood upon your armour.

GIANCIOTTO.

Have I painted you?

FRANCESCA.

You are all over dust.

GIANCIOTTO.

Lady, the dust

Is bread to me.

FRANCESCA.

You are not wounded?

GIANCIOTTO.

Wounds?

I feel none.

FRANCESCA.

But you must be thirsty.

GIANCIOTTO.

Yes,

I am very thirsty.

FRANCESCA.

Samaragdi, bring the wine.

[The SLAVE comes forward with the jar and the cup.]

GIANCIOTTO

[With delighted surprise].

What my dear lady, you have taken thought  
I might be thirsty? Why, you must have set  
Your slave to watch for me, that you should  
know

My coming to the minute.

[FRANCESCA pours out the wine and hands the  
cup to her husband. PAOLO stands aside in  
silence, watching the men who are preparing  
the fiery cask.]

FRANCESCA.

Drink, it is wine of Scios.

GIANCIOTTO.

Drink first, I pray you.

A draught.

FRANCESCA.

I have not poisoned it, my lord.

GIANCIOTTO.

You laugh at me. Not for suspicion's sake,  
But for the favour, for the favour of it,

Francesca, my true wife.  
I have no fear of treachery from you.  
My horse has not yet stumbled under me.  
Drink, lady.

[FRANCESCA touches the cup with her lips.]

It is sweet,  
After the fight, to see your face again,  
To take a strong wine from your hands, and  
drink it  
Down at a draught.

[He empties the cup.]

So. Why this warms my heart.  
And Paolo? Where is Paolo?  
Why has he not a word for you? He comes  
Back from Cesena, and not  
A word of welcome has my kinsman from you.  
Paolo, come here. Are you not thirsty? Leave  
Greek fire for Greek wine. Then  
We will burn up the Parcitadi living!  
Lady, pour out for him a cup brimful  
And drink with him a draught, to do him  
honour;  
And welcome him, welcome the perfect archer.

FRANCESCA.

I have already greeted him.

GIANCIOTTO.

But when?

FRANCESCA.

When he was shooting.

PAOLO.

Do you know, Gianciotto,  
I came up on the tower



And found her in the act of making trial  
With Berlingerio of a fiery dart?

GIANCIOTTO.

Is that the truth?

PAOLO.

She played

With lighted fire, and the poor man-at-arms  
Was crying out for fear the tower should burn,  
And she the while was laughing. I heard her  
laugh,

While the fire lay as gentle at her feet  
As a greyhound in leash.

GIANCIOTTO.

Is that the truth,

Francesca?

FRANCESCA.

I was weary of my rooms  
And of my whimpering women. And of a truth  
I had rather look, my lord, on open war  
Than feed fear closeted.

GIANCIOTTO.

Daughter of Guido,

Your father's seal is on you. May God make  
you

Fruitful to me, that you may give me many  
And many a lion's cub!

[FRANCESCA *knits her brow.*]

Paolo, you have not drunk!

Drink, you are pale, Pour out a cup for him,  
My woman warrior, full, and drink a draught.  
He shot a splendid bolt.

PAOLO.

Do you know, Gianciotto,  
Who lifted up the window while I shot?  
She! In her hand she held the little cord  
That lifts it, like the children of our soldiers;  
And steady was her hand and firm her eye.

GIANCIOTTO.

Why, come then, come, my lady, and make war  
Among the castles! I will make for you  
A breastplate of fine gold, and you shall go  
Riding with sword and spear,  
Like the brave Countess Aldruda di Bertinoro,  
When she went out to fight with Marchesella  
Against the Councillor of Magonza. Ah!  
You have been apart from me too long, dear  
lady.  
Now with that dark band underneath your chin  
And round your neck, you seem to wear a gor-  
get:  
It gives you a wild sort of grace. True, eh,  
Paozzo? But you have not yet drunk! Drink,  
now.  
Drink, you are pale. You have worked well.  
This night  
We shall not sleep, two in our beds. So, lady,  
Pour out the wine.

FRANCESCA.

See, I am pouring it.

GIANCIOTTO.

It is almost dark here; one can hardly see;  
You might have spilt it.

FRANCESCA.

Drink, my lord and kinsman,  
Out of the cup in which your brother drank.  
God give you both good fortune,  
Each as the other, and alike to me!  
[PAOLO *drinks, looking straight into* FRANCESCA's  
*eyes.*]

GIANCIOTTO.

Good fortune, Paolo,  
I had begun to tell you, and I stopped;  
I have happy tidings for you. In the hour  
Of victory there came to our good father  
Envoys from Florence, saying you are elected  
The Captain of the People and the Commune  
Of Florence.

PAOLO.

Envoys came!

GIANCIOTTO.

Why, yes. You are sorry?

PAOLO.

No, I will go.

[FRANCESCA *turns her face to the shadow and moves  
a few steps nearer the tower. The SLAVE retires  
to one side and stands motionless.*]

GIANCIOTTO.

You must go within three days.  
You will have time to go to Ghiaggiolo  
To your Orabile, who is used by now  
To being a widow. And from there you will go  
To the city of gay living that has thriven  
Under the guidance of the joyous friars,  
Full of fat merchants, and of merry-makers,

And gentry of the Court, and there the tables  
 Are spread both night and morning, and they  
     dance there  
 And sing there, and you can sport to heart's  
     content.

*[His face clouds over and he becomes bitter  
 again.]*

We will stay here and set the trap for wolves  
 And slit the throats of lambkins. Iron shall  
     knock

On iron for the pleasure of our ears,  
 Sardinian rod and hatchet of Orezza  
 On bolt with rounded edge, morning and night  
 And night and morning. Here then we will  
     wait

Till in some escalade another stone  
 Fracture another knee. And then, why, then,  
 Giovanni, the old Lamester, Gianni Ciotto,  
 Shall have himself tied tightly on the back  
 Of a stallion with the staggers, and so slung  
 Neck and crop ravaging down the ways of hell.

*[FRANCESCA moves restlessly to and fro in the  
 shadow, Through the archway is seen the  
 evening sky reddened by the flames].*

PAOLO.

Giovanni, are you angry with me?

GIANCIOOTTO.

No,

Did you not split the tongue of him who cried  
 His jests against me? "At him! At him! Ha!  
 The Lamester with the lovely wife!" cried out  
 Ugolino as he rode. His voice was loud:

Did it reach you at the window? I was there,  
Eye upon eye, and stirrup against stirrup,  
When your good shaft went straight  
Into his snarling mouth,  
And through, and out the back way of the head.  
And yet you might have missed.  
I felt the feathers of the arrow-shaft  
Whistle against my face. You might have  
missed.

PAOLO.

But since I did not miss, why think of it?

GIANCIOTTO.

It is your way to run these sorts of risks.  
At Florence be more cautious. You are going  
To a hard post. Have sharp and rapid sight  
But also prudent hand.

PAOLO.

Since you advise me,  
Does it not seem to you, brother, as if  
'Twere wiser let it go? We shall have need  
Of all our forces here. The year is turnina  
Not over fortunately for the Guelfs,  
Since the defeat of that Giovanni d'Appia  
And the rebellion since in Sicily,  
In favour of the Angevins.

GIANCIOTTO.

We must needs  
Accept, and that without delay. You now  
Shall be the keeper of the peace where once  
Our mighty father was the Governor  
Under King Charles, in the one great Guelf  
city

That prospers still. And so beyond the bounds  
 Of our Romagna shall the name of us  
 Sound high and spread abroad; and each of us  
 Shall follow where his rising star leads on.  
 I go my way, my sword has eyes for me;  
 My horse has not yet stumbled under me.

[While he speaks, MALATESTINO is brought,  
 wounded, down the stairs of the tower, be-  
 tween lighted torches, like a corpse. The  
 shadow grows darker].

FRANCESCA

[From the back].

O, what is this? Horror! Do you not see  
 Malatestino, there, Malatestino,  
 The soldiers carrying him in their arms  
 Between the torches? They have killed his  
 father!

*She runs towards the MEN, who are coming down  
 the side stairs, and passing through the  
 midst of the archers, who leave off their work  
 and make way in silence. GIANCIOTTO and  
 PAOLO run forward. ODDO DALLE CAMI-  
 NATE and FOSCOLO D'OLNANO are carrying  
 the bleeding YOUTH. FOUR ARCHERS with  
 long quivers accompany them with torches.*

FRANCESCA

[Bending over the YOUTH].

Malatestino! O God,  
 His eye is black with blood,  
 His eye is cut and torn. How have they killed  
 him?

O, has his father seen it? Does he know?

[GIANCIOTTO *feels over his body and listens to his heart.*]

GIANCIOTTO.

Francesca, no, he is not dead! He breathes,  
His heart is beating still. Do you not see?  
He is coming to. The blow has struck him  
senseless;

But he is coming to.

The life is sound in him; he has good teeth  
To keep it back from going. Courage, now!  
Set him down gently here, here on this heap  
Of ropes.

[*As the BEARERS are setting him down, the  
YOUTH begins to revive.*]

Oddo, how was it?

ODDO.

From a stone

While they were scaling the Galassa tower.

FOSCOLO.

All by himself he had made prisoner  
Montagna Parcitade,  
And bound him with his sword-belt, and led him  
back

To Messer Malatesta; and returned  
To take the Tower.

ODDO.

Just as he was, without

A visor to his helmet, heedlessly:  
You know how hot he is!

FOSCOLO.

And he was angry

Because his father would not suffer him  
To cut the prisoner's throat.

[FRANCESCA pours a few drops of wine between  
the lips of the YOUTH. PAOLO follows every  
movement greedily with his eyes.]

GIANCIOTTO

[Looking at the wound].

A stone out of the hand; not from a sling.

Come, it is nothing.

Lean as he is, he needs

Crow-bar and catapult to put him under.

This is a heart of metal, a tough liver.

He bears the sign of God now, as I do,

In warfare. He shall be

Named, from henceforth, as I am, by his scar.

[He kisses him on the forehead.]

Malatestino!

[The YOUTH shakes himself and recovers consciousness.]

Drink, Malatestino!

[He drinks some of the wine, which FRANCESCA  
puts to his lips. Then he shakes his head,  
and is about to raise to his wounded left eye  
the hand still wearing its gauntlet. FRANCESCA prevents him.]

MALATESTINO.

[As if suddenly awaking, with violence].

He will escape, I say. He is not safe.

In prison. I tell you he will find a way

To escape presently. Father, give me leave

To cut his throat! I took him for you! Father,



Dear Father, let me kill him. I am sure  
He will find a way to escape presently.  
He is an evil one. Well, you then, give him  
One hammer-stroke upon the head; one blow,  
And he will turn upon himself three times.

FRANCESCO.

Malatestino, what do you see? You are raving,  
What do you see, Malatestino?

ODDO.

Still

He is raging at Montagna.

GIANCIOTTO.

Malatestino, do you not know me? See,  
You are on the Mastra Tower.  
Montagna is in good clutches. Be assured  
He will not run away from you.

MALATESTINO.

Giovanni,

Where am I? O Francesca, and you too?

[*He again raises his hand to his eye.*]

What is the matter with my eye?

GIANCIOTTO.

A stone

That caught you in it.

FRANCESCA.

Are you suffering much?

[*The YOUTH rises to his feet and shakes his head.*]

MALATESTINO.

The stone-throw of a Ghibelline camp-  
follower

To make me suffer?

Come, come, there's no use now

No time to weave new linen with old thread.  
 Put on a bandage, quick,  
 Give me to drink, and then  
 To horse, to horse!

[FRANCESCA takes off the band that surrounds  
 her chin and throat.]

GIANCIOTTO.

Can you see?

MALATESTINO.

One's enough for me.

GIANCIOTTO.

Try now

If the left one is lost.

[He takes a torch from one of the ARCHERS.]

Close your right eye. Francesca,  
 Put your hand over it. He has his gauntlet.

[She closes his eyelid with her fingers. GIANCI-  
 OTTO puts the torch before his face.]

Look! Do you see this torch?

MALATESTINO.

No.

GIANCIOTTO.

Not a glimmer?

MALATESTINO.

No, no!

[He takes FRANCESCA's wrist and pushes it away.]

But I can see with one.

ARCHER

[Excited by the YOUTH's courage].

Long live

Messer Malatestino! Malatesta!

MALATESTINO.

To horse, to horse!  
Giovanni, though the day is won; yet, yet,  
Is not old Parcitade living still,  
And waiting reinforcements? We must not  
Be blinded. Oddo, Foscolo, the best  
Is still to have.

GIANCIOTTO

[*turning to the ARCHERS*].

The cask! is the cask ready?

[*He goes towards the tower, to direct the operations of the catapult.*]

ODDO.

You will fall half-way there.

FRANCESCA.

Stay, Malatestino,  
Do not go back into the fight! Stay here,  
And I will bathe and heal you. Run, Smaragdi,  
Prepare the water and the linen; send  
For Maestro Almodoro.

MALATESTINO.

No, kinswoman,  
Put on a bandage, quick,  
And let me go. I will come back again  
To find the doctor: bid the doctor wait.  
I feel no pain at all.  
But bandage me, I beg of you, kinswoman,  
With the band that you have taken off your  
face.

FRANCESCA.

I will do the best I can for you, God knows,

But it will not be well done.

[*She binds up his eye. He observes PAOLO, who has not taken his eyes off FRANCESCA.*]

MALATESTINO.

O, Paozzo,

What are you doing there? dreaming?

FRANCESCA.

'Twill not

be well done.

MALATESTINO.

You have been elected Captain

Of the People at Florence. When I hailed  
Montagna

Up to our father, bound, I saw the envoys,

The Guelfs of the Red Lily,

Who were with him then.

[*A guttural cry is heard as the MEN raise the cask upon the catapult. Above the battlements the glow of the fire spreads over the sky. The bells ring in all directions. Trumpets are heard.*]

They have shut up Montagna

In the sea prison. He will get away.

I begged my father, I begged him, on my knees,  
To let me finish.

The envoys smiled. My father would not let  
me,

Because of them, I know,

To seem magnanimous. Another night

Montagna must not spend here. Will you help  
me?

Come to the prison! Have you done, kinswoman?

But do not tremble.

FRANCESCA

*[Tying the knot].*

Yes, yes, but it is not well done. Your forehead  
Is burning. You are feverish. Do not go,  
Malatestino. Listen to me. Stay,  
For God's sake!

GIANCIOTTO

*[On the tower].*

Heave it! Let it go!

*[The noise of the catapult is heard as it discharges  
the cask with its lighted fuses]*

ARCHER.

Long life

To Malatesta! Long life to the Guelfs!  
Death to the Ghibellines and Parcitade!

MALATESTINO

*[turning and running forward].*

To horse! to horse! to horse!

*[ODDO, FOSCOLO, and the ARCHERS with their  
torches follow him.]*

*[The stage darkens. The reflection of the fire  
reddens the shadow in which PAOLO and  
FRANCESCA remain alone.]*

PAOLO.

Farewell, Francesca.

*[As he approaches her, she draws back with terror.]*

GIANCIOTTO

*[From the tower].*

Paolo! Paolo!

FRANCESCA.

Brother, farewell! Brother!

[*PAOLO goes towards the Tower, from which the fiery staves are again being thrown. FRANCESCA, left alone in the shadow, makes the sign of the cross and falls on her knees, bowing herself to the ground. At the back a still brighter illumination lights up the sky.*]

ARCHER.

Fire! fire! Death to the Ghibellines! Fire!

Death

To Parcitade and the Ghibellines!

Long live the Guelfs and long live Malatesta!

[*The fiery shafts are let fly through the battlements. The bells ring in all directions. The trumpets sound in the mias. of cries rising from the streets of the burning and blood-stained city.*]

### ACT III.

*A room painted in fresco, elegantly divided into panels, portraying stories out of the romance of Tristan, between birds, beasts, flowers, and fruits. Under the moulding, around the walls, runs a frieze in the form of festoons, on which are written some words from a love-song:*

*“Meglio m'è dormire gaudendo  
C'avere penzieri vegliando.”*

*On the right is a beautiful alcove hidden by rich curtains ; on the left a doorway covered by a heavy hanging ; at the back a long window with many panes, divided by little columns, looking out on the Adriatic ; a pot of basil is on the window-sill. Near the door, raised two feet above the floor, is a musicians' gallery, with compartments decorated with open carvings. Near the window is a reading desk, on which is open “The History of Launcelot of the Lake,” composed of large illuminated pages, firmly bound together by thin boards covered in crimson velvet. Besides it is a couch, a sort of long chair without back or arms, with many cushions of samite, almost on the level of the window-sill, on which any one leaning back can see over the whole sea-shore of Rimini. A chamber organ of small*

*size, with chest, pipes, keys, bellows, and registers finely worked, stands in the corner, a lute and a viol beside it. On a small table is a silver mirror, amongst scent-bottles, glasses, purses, girdles, and other trinkets. Large iron candlesticks stand beside the alcove and the musicians' gallery. Footstools are scattered about, and in the midst of the floor is seen the bolt of a trap-door, through which a passage leads to the lower rooms.*

[FRANCESCA is reading in the book. The WOMEN, seated on the footstools in a circle, embroidering the border of a coverlet, listen to the story; each of them has a little phial of seed pearls and gold threads hanging from her girdle. The March sunlight beats on the crimson taffeta, and sheds a diffused light on the faces bent over the needlework. The SLAVE is near the window-sill, gazing into the sky.]

FRANCESCA

[reading].

“ Thereat Galeotto comes to her and says :  
 ‘ Lady, have pity on him, for God’s sake,  
 And do for me as I would do for you,  
 If you should ask it of me.’ ‘ What is this  
 That I should pity ?’ ‘ Lady, you well know  
 How much he loves you, and has done for you,  
 More than knight ever did for any lady.’  
 ‘ In truth he has done more for me than I  
 Can ever do for him again, and he  
 Could ask of me nothing I would not do ;  
 But he asks nothing of me, and he has



So deep a sadness, that I marvel at it.”  
And Galeotto says: ‘Lady, have pity.’  
‘That will I have,’ says she, ‘and even such  
As you would have me; but he asks of me  
Nothing. . .’”

[*The WOMEN laugh. FRANCESCA throws herself back on the cushions, troubled and enervated.*]

GARSEMDA.

Madonna,  
How ever could a knight, and Launcelot,  
Have been so shamefaced?

ALDA.

All the while the queen,  
The poor queen, only longing she might give  
Her lover what he would not ask of her!

BIANCOFIORE.

She should have said to him: “Most worthy  
knight,  
Your sadness will avail you not a mite.”

ALTICHIARA.

Guenevere did but jest with him, and chose  
To wait her time; but nothing in the world  
Was in her mind more than a speedy bed.

ADONELLA.

And Galeotto, though indeed he was  
A noble prince, knew well enough the art  
That is called—

FRANCESCA.

Adonella, hush! I tire

Of listening to your chattering so long.  
Smaragdi, tell me, is the falcon back?

SLAVE.

No, lady; he has lost his way.

FRANCESCA.

Do you hear  
His little golden bell?

SLAVE.

I cannot hear it.  
My eyes are good, and yet I cannot see him.  
He has flown too high.

[FRANCESCA turns to the window and gazes out.]

ALDA.

He will be lost, Madonna.  
It was not well to let him out of leash.  
He was a little haughty.

GARSENDA.

He was one  
They call the Ventimillia breed, brave birds;  
This one had thirteen feathers in his tail.

ALTICHIARA.

Their home is on an island;  
He will have flown back to his island home.

BIANCOFIORE.

He followed cranes, was good at catching them;  
And Simonetto begs of you, Madonna,  
That he may have a crane, to make two fifes  
Of the two leg-bones, and he says they sound  
Sweetly as might be.

GARSEDA.

No,

He is not coming back; he was too proud;  
Ah, like the one who gave him to you, Messer  
Malatestino, I would say: may he  
Not hear me! If you had but rubbed his beak,  
At dead of night,  
With horse's belly-grease,  
He would have come to love you so, Madonna,  
He never would have flown out of your hand.

*[The WOMEN burst out laughing.]*

ADONELLA.

Now listen to the learned doctress!

ALTICHIARA.

At dead of night with horse's belly-grease!

GARSEDA.

Why, yes, I have read the book that Danchi  
wrote,  
The first and best master of falconry;  
It gives you all the rules.

FRANCESCA.

Go, Adonella,

Run to the falconer, tell him what has hap-  
pened,  
And bid him go with his decoy, and call  
And search all over. He has flown, perhaps,  
Up to some tower, and perched there. Bid him  
go  
And search all over.

*[ADONELLA drops her needle and hurries out.]*

ALTICHIARA.

He has fled away,  
Madonna, after the first swallows.

ALDA.

See,

The blood of all the swallows  
Is raining on the sea.

Biancofiore

[singing].

"Fresh in the Calends of March,  
O swallows, coming home,  
Fresh from the quiet lands beyond the sea."

FRANCESCA.

O, yes, yes, Biancofiore!  
Some music, give me music!  
Sing over a low song  
In the minor key!  
Leave off your sewing, go  
And bring me music.  
[The WOMEN rise quickly and fold up the taffeta.]

Look

For Simonetto, Biancofiore.

Biancofiore.

Yes,

Madonna.

FRANCESCA.

And you, Alda, look for Bordo  
And Signorello and Rosso,  
And bid them come and bring the instruments  
And bring the tablature  
For making music in the room here.

ALDA.

Yes,

Madonna.

FRANCESCA.

Altichiara, if you see  
The doctor, send him to me.

ALTICHIARA.

Yes, Madonna.

FRANCESCA.

And you, Garsenda, if you come across  
The merchant who is here from Florence bid  
him  
Come hither.

GARSENDA.

Yes, Madonna, I will seek him.

FRANCESCA.

Bring me a garland of March violets.  
To-day 'tis the March calends.

BIANCOFIORE.

Madonna, you shall have one, and a fair one.

[*All go out.*]

[FRANCESCA turns to the SLAVE, who is still  
gazing into the sky].

FRANCESCA.

O Smaragdi, he is not coming back?

SLAVE.

He is not coming back.  
The falconer will bring him back again.  
Do not be troubled.

FRANCESCA.

But I am troubled, yes; Malatestino

Will be enraged with me, because I have kept  
His gifts so ill. He tells me that he gave me  
The king of falcons. I have lost it.

SLAVE.

Wild  
And thankless and unkind, if so it flies  
From the face of man.

[FRANCESCA is silent for a few instants.]

FRANCESCA.

I am afraid of him.

SLAVE.

Afraid of whom, lady?

FRANCESCA.

I am afraid

Of Malatestino.

SLAVE.

Is it his blind eye  
That frightens you?

FRANCESCA.

No, no, the other one,  
The one he sees with: it is terrible.

SLAVE.

Let him not see you, lady.

FRANCESCA.

Ah, Smaragdi, what was the wine you brought  
That night, upon the Mastra tower, when all  
The city was in arms? Was it bewitched?

SLAVE.

Lady, what are you saying?

FRANCESCA.

It is as if you brought me a drugged wine;

The poison is taking hold  
Upon the veins of her that drank of it,  
And all my fate grows cruel to me again.

SLAVE.

What is this sadness, lady?  
Although the falcon has not yet come back,  
He has come back to you,  
Lady, who is the sun that your soul loves.

FRANCESCA

[*turning pale, and speaking with repressed  
anger*].

Unhappy woman!  
How do you dare to speak it? Treachery  
Even in you? Accursed be the hour  
In which you brought him to me, and his fraud  
With him! Was it not you  
Who made the way that leads me to my death?  
Three cups of bitterness I do not leave you;  
It is you that set them down before me, you  
That brim them up each day, without a tear.

[*The SLAVE flings herself on the ground.*]

SLAVE.

Tread on me, tread on me! Between two stones  
Crush in my head!

FRANCESCA

[*More calmly*].

Rise up,

It is no fault of yours, my poor Smaragdi,  
It is no fault of yours.  
Suddenly like a spirit of my heart  
You ran to meet my joy! On your eyes too  
There was a veil; and veiled by the same fate

Was the iniquity of my father. We,  
All of us, were made powerless and unpitying,  
Wretched and ignorant,  
Upon the bank of a river,  
Unblamable all of us,  
Upon the bank of a loud rushing river.  
I crossed it, I alone,  
I had no thought of you;  
I found myself upon the other side.  
And we are thrust apart,  
Ah me, and never to be one again.  
And I now say to you:  
I cannot. And you say:  
Cross and come back.  
And I: I do not know.

*[She gives to the last words almost the cadence  
of a melody; then she laughs a dry and bitter  
laugh, which seems as if torn out of her.  
But the sound of her own laughter fright-  
ens her. The SLAVE stands trembling.]*

O my poor reason, rule  
Still, do not turn away!  
What is this demon that has hold on me?  
The enemy was laughing in my heart:  
Did you not hear him?  
I cannot pray now, I can pray no longer.

SLAVE

*[In a low voice].*

Shall I not call him?

FRANCESCA

*[Starting].*

Who?



[*She looks about her anxiously: her eye turns to the motionless curtain over the door. Her craving overcomes her, her voice sounds hoarse.*]

Smaragdi, did you see Messer Giovanni  
Take horse?

SLAVE.

Yes, lady, with the old man too,  
With Messer Malatesta, the old man.  
They are going surely to an act of peace  
With the Lord Bishop. They are riding now  
By Sant' Arcangelo

FRANCESCA

[*darkly*].

You watch, Smaragdi; you see all, hear all,  
Know all; well, be so always.

SLAVE.

Doubt me not,  
Lady. Sleep safe and sound. Could I but give  
you  
Joy, as the stone whose name I bear could give  
you!

FRANCESCA.

And do you know where Malatestino is?

SLAVE.

At Roncofreddo, sent there by his father  
With thirty horse.

FRANCESCA.

I am afraid of him.  
Keep him away from me.

SLAVE.

But why so, lady?  
When he was sick, did you not care for him,  
Day and night, like a sister?

FRANCESCA.

O, that name  
Is like a poison here. Samaritana,  
Where are you? and the stream of your young  
freshness,  
Where does it run, that now can never slake  
My thirst when I am nigh to perishing?  
I see about me, in the shadow about me,  
Eyes, savage eyes, that spy on me, the eyes  
Of wild beasts only waiting to take hold  
And fight over their prey;  
And they are all veined with the selfsame  
blood,  
They are all brothers;  
One mother gave them birth. Ah me! what  
sad  
Sorcery have I suffered? Who has set  
Thus, thus, upon the threshold of my life  
This mortal sin? You, creature of the earth,  
Who dig about the roots of poisonous flowers,  
Say, where was this unnatural evil born?  
It is from you I know  
The old hard song:  
"If three I find, three I take!" Now the  
demon  
Has taken them all together, three has taken,  
And me with them.

SLAVE.

Call not upon the enemy!

Be it forgiven to you, body and soul!  
You are deceived in this.  
The shadow is a glass to you, and therein  
You see your own eyes burn.  
Call not upon your head  
Some evil fortune! May the Lord God watch  
Over you as your slave will surely watch!

FRANCESCA.

There is no escape, Smaragdi. You have said  
it:

The shadow is a glass to me; and God  
Lest me be lost. What days  
And nights I spent alone by the bedside  
Of the sick man, that I might purge myself  
Of evil thoughts that faded, faded out.  
I touched the horrible wound,  
Praying; I washed away  
That evil foulness with my prayers. And then  
My soul, amid that horror, seemed to see  
Grace and salvation; then it was I found  
The beast desire that wakened in the veins  
Of that too violent life. Do you understand?  
The gaping wound under the forehead closed  
And another opened, far more horrible,  
Within the breast. And thoughts  
That had faded out, my old despairing  
thoughts,  
Seemed to infect me with a blacker venom,  
More cruelly; and my flesh  
Upon my sorrow like a covering  
Intolerable;  
And exiled from the world  
All the sweet things of springtide and of sleep;

And the very face of love  
Turned into stone, and turned  
To a terror; only hatred and desire,  
Bewildered in the darkness of the world,  
And reeling blindly in their work of death,  
Like drunken slaughterers,  
That, full of wine  
And fury, slay each other witlessly.

SLAVE

[*in a low voice*].

Do not despair! Listen, listen! I know  
A spell to cast on him who makes you fear;  
I know a drink that drives these thoughts  
away  
And cures remembrance. You must give it  
him  
With the left hand  
When he dismounts wearied and hungering.  
I will teach you how to say the spell.

FRANCESCA.

Smaragdi,

If it avails at all, give it to me,  
And let me drink it, and be free again.  
But there is no escape. Will you interpret  
The dream I always dream,  
Night after night?

SLAVE.

Lady, tell me the dream;

I will interpret it.

FRANCESCA.

Night after night I see the savage hunt  
Nastagio degli Onesti saw one day

In the pine-wood of Ravenna, as I heard  
Bannino tell the story when we went  
Down to the shore at Chiassi. In my dream  
I see it as it was in very truth.  
A naked woman, through the depth of the  
wood,  
Dishevelled, torn by branches and by thorns,  
Weeping and crying for mercy,  
Runs, followed by two mastiffs at her heels  
That bite her cruelly when they overtake her;  
See, and behind her through the depth of the  
wood,  
Mounted on a black charger,  
A dark knight, strong and angry in the face,  
Sword in hand, threatening her  
With a swift death in terrifying words.  
Then the dogs, taking hold  
Of the woman's naked side,  
Stop her; and the fierce knight, coming abreast,  
Dismounts from off his horse,  
And with his sword in hand  
Runs at the woman so,  
And she, upon her knees, pinned to the earth  
By the two mastiffs, cries to him for mercy;  
And he thereat drives at her with full strength,  
Pierces her in the breast  
So that the sword goes through her; and she  
falls  
Forward, upon her face,  
Still always weeping; and the knight draws  
forth  
A dagger, and opens her  
By the hip-bone, and draws

Her heart out, and the rest,  
And throws it to the dogs that hungrily  
Devour it of a sudden. But she has lain  
Not long before, as if she were not dead,  
She rises up and she begins again  
Her lamentable running toward the sea;  
And the two dogs after her, tearing her,  
Always, and always after her the knight,  
Upon his horse again,  
And with his sword in hand,  
Always threatening her.  
Tell me, can you interpret me my dream,  
Smaragdi?

[*The SLAVE, as she listens, seems stricken with terror.*]

Are you frightened?

[*GARSEDA enters followed by the MERCHANT and his BOY carrying a pack.*]

GARSEDA

[*gaily*].

Madonna, here is the merchant with his goods.  
May he come in? He is the Florentine,  
Who came to Rimino yesterday with the escort  
Of Messer Paolo.

[*FRANCESCA, her face suddenly flushing, shakes off her gloomy thoughts, and seems eager to seek forgetfulness of her mortal anguish ; but a kind of painful tension accompanies her volubility.*]

FRANCESCA.

Come in, come in, we are minded to renew  
Our robes with the new season.

Come in, come in. I would have something made  
Of sarcenet woven of many coloured threads,  
Of many colours, of a hundred colours,  
So that at each turn and return of light  
And of sight the aspect changes ; O Smaragdi,  
A raiment of pure joy !

[*The MERCHANT inclines humbly.*]

Good merchant, what have you to offer me ?

MERCHANT.

Noble Madonna, everything that suits  
With your nobility ; light taffetas,  
Highly embroidered, circlet upon circlet,  
Sarcenet, samite, and damask,  
Grogram and bombasin,  
Camlet, barracan, fustian,  
Serge, Neopolitan doublets,  
Sicilian tunics,  
Watered silk, high or low, watered with gold  
And silver thread, and waved ;  
Linen of Lucca, Osta, Dondiscarte,  
Of Bruges, of Tournai, and of Terremonde,  
And of Mostavolieri in Normandy,  
Fine serge from Como, changeable taffeta,  
Cloth of silk worked in trees and squares and  
eyelets  
And patterns toothed and fish-boned,  
Velvets of every sort  
And every make,  
Velvets one piled, and two piled, and three piled.

[*GARSENDA bursts out laughing.*]

FRANCESCA

Enough ! enough ! And have you found a ware-  
house

In Rimino for so many goods ?

MERCHANT.

I am

Giotto di Bernarduccio Boninsegni,  
The agent of the Company of Piero  
Di Niccolao degli Oricellari,  
That has its thousand samples in the ware-  
houses  
Of Calimala and of Calimaruzza,  
And sends its agents over all the west,  
As far as Ireland, and, in the Levant,  
As far as the Cattai, noble Madonna.

[GARSEDA laughs. The MERCHANT turns and  
looks at her]

GARSEDA.

A florin or two, eh?  
You lent to Prester John,  
(Poor wretch!) or to the Khan of Babylon.  
[The MERCHANT opens the pack before FRAN-  
CESCA, who stands at the reading desk, and  
exhibits his goods.]

MERCHANT.

We go to Armalecco, to buy vair,  
Sable and ermine,  
And marten-skins, and lynx, and other skins ;  
And to buy woollen too,  
To the monasteries of England, and to Chinna,  
To Biliguass, Croccostrande, and Isticchi,  
To Diolacresca, Giúttebi, and Bufeltro,  
In Cornwall.

[GARSEDA laughs.]

GARSEDA.

Then you saw

King Mark in Cornwall, then



The fair-haired Iseult bought brocades from  
you,  
Sky-coloured, of a surety? Or you carried  
Her\*Tristan, hidden in your pack of goods,  
Into her chamber?

MERCHANT.

They say that in Romagna  
All fowling, nay, all gulling, is permitted ;  
But the blackbird has already crossed the stream  
And his mate has crossed the Po already.

GARSENDA.

Shafts

Of Florence make and Lombard : bastard  
shafts,  
They neither shine nor sting,  
Because I do not know them.

[FRANCESCA seems intent on turning over the stuffs.]

FRANCESCA.

This is good,  
Brocade with golden pomegranates. And how,  
Giotto, did you come here to Rimini?

MERCHANT.

Noble Madonna, full of perils is  
The life of merchants. Needs must be we take  
Every occasion that is offered us.  
I, by good fortune, chanced to come upon  
The escort of the noble Messer Paolo,  
And had good leave to follow it in safety.  
So swift a journey may I never make

Again ; with Messer Paolo you ride  
The whole day long, and never sleep at all.

[FRANCESCA *feels over the stuffs, outwardly calm,*  
*but an unconquerable smile burns in her eyes.*  
GARSEDA *has gone down on her knees to*  
*see the stuffs.*]

FRANCESCA.

You rode so swiftly?

MERCHANT.

Without rest or stay,  
With tightened bridles, if I might so put it ;  
And every stream they forded, could not wait  
Until the flood had ebb'd. And Messer Paolo  
Labour'd his horse with spur in such a haste  
That there was always between him and us,  
A mile or so of distance. I should say  
He has some urgent business here. He asked  
The Commune leave of absence  
After two months, or little more, that he  
Had entered into office ; truth it is  
That the whole city sorrows at it, never  
A more accustomed and more civil knight  
Was Captain of the People there in Florence.

FRANCESCA.

I will take this brocade.

MERCHANT.

Good, very good,  
Madonna, And Bernardino della Porta  
Of Parma, they have chosen  
To take his place, is worth,  
Why not so much as one hair of the head  
Of Messer Paolo.

FRANCESCA.

And this samite too.

MERCHANT.

Madonna, this with patterns all of gold. . .

FRANCESCA.

Yes, I like this one too. It seems to me  
You Florentines keep feast on feast, and make  
The year a holiday, and care for nothing  
Except for games and sports and banquetings  
And dances.

MERCHANT.

Yes, Madonna, 'tis a sweet  
And blessed land, our Florence : 'tis the flower  
Of the others, Fiorenza!

FRANCESCA.

I will take this silk too with the silver lines.  
And the Captain of the People,  
Was he well liked by all the companies  
Of knights and ladies?

MERCHANT.

Each rivalled with each  
Of all the companies  
To have his presence, as the most well-spoken  
And gallant man he indeed is; but he,  
By what I know, would hold himself apart,  
A trifle haughtily, and rare it was  
To see him at their suppers. And in time  
Of Carnival, in Santa Felicita  
Beyond the Arno, I know by Messer Betto  
De' Rossi that they made a company,  
A thousand men or more, all dressed in white,  
And Messer Paolo by this company

Was chosen Lord of Love,  
But he would not consent . . .

FRANCESCA.

Here, this shot sarcenet  
And this buff-coloured cotton. You were say-  
ing,  
Giotto . . .

[GARSEDA *takes the stuffs selected, and puts  
them aside, first holding them up to the  
light.*]

MERCHANT.

I have seen him sometimes go about  
With Guido of the Messers Cavalcante  
Dei Cavalcanti ; he that is, they say,  
One of the best logicians in the world,  
And a most manifest  
Natural philosopher,  
And, as they say, he seeks,  
Among the tombs, to find  
There never was a God.

FRANCESCA.

Garsenda, you may have this violet samite.

GARSEDA.

O Madonna, much thanks!

MERCHANT.

'Tis a fine violet,  
One of the finest colours of the dye.

FRANCESCA.

And for you, Smaragdi? You were say ng,  
Giotto . . .

MERCHANT.

Often he had with him  
Good singers and good players, specially

Casella da Pistoia the musician,  
A master in the art of singing songs  
Of love . . .

FRANCESCA.

For you, Smaragdi, you shall have  
This green-brown serge. And Altichiara too  
And Biancofiore, each of you must have  
A new dress.

MERCHANT.

This, Madonna, is a colour  
Of the newest fashion, it is called the seamew,  
A very marvel, with its golden bunches;  
Mona Giuglia degli Adimari, the other week,  
Bought from me full ten yards of it. And this  
With the goose pattern. Capon's foot, bear's ear,  
Young pigeon, angel's wing,  
Iris, corn-flower, new colours . . .

[FRANCESCA rises impetuously, as if breaking  
some constraint.]

FRANCESCA.

Merchant, leave it,  
And I will choose at leisure.

[She turns towards the window and looks out on  
the shining sea, shading her eyes with her  
hand.]

How the sun  
Is strong, this March, and fierce!  
There goes a little ship with a red sail!  
Here are the swallows coming back in flocks!

GARSEDA

[to the MERCHANT].

How long shall you be staying in Rimini?

MERCHANT.

Three days. And then I have to make my way  
To Barletta and from Barletta I take ship  
For Cyprus.

[*The SLAVE lights up, hearing the name of her country.*]

GARSEDA.

Listen, listen,

Smaragdi!

SLAVE

[*anxiously*].

Do you go to Cyprus, merchant?

MERCHANT.

I go there yearly. We have warehouses  
At Famagosta, and there yearly sell  
Thousands and thousands besants' worth of  
goods.

Are you from Cyprus?

SLAVE.

Salute for me the Mount Chionodes,  
His head in snow and olives at his feet ;  
And drink for me at the spring of Chitria  
A draught for my heart's sake.

FRANCESCA

[*turning*].

"And Cyprus I would make for,  
And at Limisso anchor,  
And land my sailors for a kiss, my captains  
For love!"

[*Instruments and merry voices are heard pre-  
luding while she goes towards the bed, droop-  
ingly, as if to lie down on it.*]

SLAVE.

And who is king there? Sire Ughetto?

MERCHANT.

Ughetto died young, Ugo di Lusignano,  
His cousin, is king now. And there have been  
Most evil deeds,  
And poisonings of women,  
And treachery of barons and the plague,  
Locusts and earthquakes,  
And Venus, queen of devils, has appeared.

[*The sounds of music and voices and laughter  
come nearer. FRANCESCA lies back on the  
bed between the half-closed curtains.*]

[*The WOMEN, with the exception of ADONELLA,  
enter, followed by the DOCTOR, the ASTROLO-  
GER, the JESTER and the MUSICIANS, who  
tune their instruments and prelude on them.  
The DOCTOR wears a dressing-gown, down  
to the heels, of a dark tan-colour; the AS-  
TROLOGER a green-brown robe and a black  
turban striped with yellow; the JESTER a  
scarlet jerkin. The MUSICIANS go up on  
their gallery, and range themselves in order.*]

ALTICHIARA.

Madonna, here is Maestro Almodoro.

ALDA.

And we have found the astrologer, Madonna.

BIANCOFIORE.

And the Jester too, Gian Figo, that procures  
Recipes against melancholy with songs  
And stories and the dust of No-Man's Land.

ALDA.

And the voices and the players  
On bagpipe, flute and lute,  
Rebec and monochord.

[*Standing upright between the curtains, FRANCESCA looks before her as if bewildered, neither smiling nor speaking.*]

BIANCOFIORE

[*coming forward*].

Here is the garland  
Of violets. May it chase your melancholy!

[*She offers it to her gracefully. FRANCESCA takes it, while ALTICHIARA takes the mirror from the table and holds it up before her face as she puts on the garland. The SLAVE slowly goes out.*]

GARSEDA.

O Maestro Almodoro,  
Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna  
Returned to earth inside one doctor's gown,  
Can you tell us what is melancholy?

[*The DOCTOR places himself in their midst, and assumes a solemn air.*]

DOCTOR.

Melancholy

Is a dark humour many call black bile,  
And it is cold and dry,  
And has its situation in the spine;  
Its nature is of the earth  
And of the autumn. Nec dubium est quidem  
Melancholicus morbus  
Ab impostore Diabolo. . .



[The JESTER puts himself in front of him, covering him. The WOMEN and the MUSICIANS laugh and whisper.]

JESTER.

When

Your devil was born, my devil had found his  
legs.

Melancholy is to drink as the Germans do,

Madonna; to backbite as the Greeks do,

To sing as the French do,

To dance as the Moors do,

To sleep as the English do,

And to stand steady like

Messere Ferragunze the Cordelier.

Madonna, I have had from you those two

Pieces of scarlet in advance: but see,

The jerkin that was new has become old.

Have you two other pieces, may it please you,

Of velvet?

[The WOMEN laugh. He eyes the merchant's  
wares, scattered over the couch.]

GARSENDA.

The Astrologer! Speak now,

Astrologer of Syria who sees all things!

[The bearded ASTROLOGER puts on a gloomy  
look and speaks with a voice that seems to  
come from a deep cave.]

ASTROLOGER.

All darts he sees not, who sees every dart;

But he who blindly aims against the heart

Takes aim from thence, whence doth all life  
depart.

JESTER.

And I believe not in your art.

[FRANCESCA looks sharply at the SARACEN  
as if fearing something.]

FRANCESCA.

What do you mean by this dark riddle? Speak,  
Maestro Isacco, explain.

ASTROLOGER.

Lady, who inward looks,  
Looks not, but he who wills that which he  
looks.

JESTER.

And yet the man of Friuli has said :  
He who wants woman wants a lord and master,  
And he who wants a lord and master wants—  
Catch who catch can! And then  
In the book of Madam Mogias of Egypt,  
That is called the Book of Piercing to the Heart,  
It is declared that woman's enemies  
Are seventeen—

[ADONELLA enters, carrying five garlands of  
white narcissi, hanging from a gold wire  
that binds them together.]

ADONELLA.

Madonna, the falconer  
Has called the falcon back. Some of his feath-  
ers  
Are bent or broken a little ; but warm water  
And a soft bandage will soon set them right.

ASTROLOGER.

The falcon's beak thou shalt not shear or break,  
But scanty clippings take;

For these, well mixed with wool, long talons  
make.

FRANCESCA.

You speak in riddles, then,  
To-day, Maestro Isacco ?

ASTROLOGER.

Not every one who speaketh speaks, but he  
Who sleeps must silent be ;  
Evils in life and truth in prophecy.

JESTER.

So may it be, amen ! Bring in the bier.  
O Saracen Isacco,  
You are a very great astronomer ;  
You prophesy, besides ;  
But you must make a little matter plain.  
Tell me, which is the easier to know,  
The things that are now past,  
Or else the things that are to come ?

ASTROLOGER.

O fool,  
Who does not know the things that he has seen,  
The things that are behind ?

JESTER.

Good, very good ; we'll see how well you know  
them.  
Now tell me this,  
What were you doing on the last March calends,  
A year ago !

[*The ASTROLOGER thinks.*]

Well, then, six months ago ?

[*The ASTROLOGER thinks. The WOMEN laugh.*  
*The JESTER speaks rapidly.*]

I will ask you, then, one last time: can you tell me  
What weather it was three months ago?

[*The ASTROLOGER thinks and stares before him.*  
*The JESTER plucks him by the robe.*]

Isacco,

Don't cast nativities, you need not gape,  
Stand steady. Now, what ship  
Came here, a month ago? What ship set sail?  
What do you gape at? Did you eat indoors  
Or out of doors a fortnight since?

ASTROLOGER.

Wait, wait

A little.

JESTER.

Wait! What? But I will not wait.  
Come now, what were you doing,  
A week ago to-day?

ASTROLOGER.

Give me a little respite.

JESTER.

Why, what respite  
Should such as I give such as you who know  
The things that are to come? What did you eat  
Four days ago?

ASTROLOGER.

Ah, I will tell you that.

JESTER.

What did you say?

ASTROLOGER.

You are in such haste.



ELEONORA DUSE



JESTER.

What haste ? Well, tell me now, what did you eat

Yesterday morning ? Tell me !

[*The ASTROLOGER, annoyed, turns his back upon him. He plucks him by the sleeve.*]

Stop ! Look at me a moment !

I lay you ten to one you do not know

If you are wide awake or if you dream.

ASTROLOGER.

I know I do not sleep, and that you are

The greatest fool now living in the world !

JESTER.

But I assure you that you do not know.

Come here. Don't go like that against the wind

Of Mongibello. Tell me, have you not

Hundreds of times gone up and down the stairs

Of the belfry-tower of Santa Colomba ? Well,

How many stairs are there ? Come here, I say !

Don't run away from me. Have you ever eaten

Medlars ? How many pips are in a medlar ?

[*The infuriated ASTROLOGER frees himself from the grip of the JESTER, amidst much laughter.*]

Then if you don't know that,

How can you know things that are in the sky,

And in the hearts of women, and in hair ?

Find a cordwainer, bid him make a rope

Out of your beard, and hang you to a star.

BIANCOFIORE.

Madonna has smiled !

Gian Figo has made even Madonna smile !

Go, go, dear doctor, to your house again,  
And take your medicine and your Latin with  
you,  
To-day is the March calends ! Song means dance  
To-day, and dance means song.  
Play, Simonetto, play !

[*The MUSICIANS begin a prelude. Those standing near go to the back, so as to leave room for the dance. ADONELLA unlooses the gold wire, and distributes the garlands of narcissi to her companions, who put them on; and retains for herself the one that bears two swallows' wings. ALDA takes out of a little bag four painted wooden swallows that have a kind of small handle under the breast, and gives one to each of her companions; who, standing ready for the dance, hold them each raised in the left hand. ADONELLA whistles, in imitation of the chirruping of swallows, and, while the other four dance and sing, she utters at intervals, according to the rhythm, the loud chirping that heralds the spring.*]

ALDA.

Fresh, fresh, in the calends of March,  
O swallows, coming home  
Fresh from the quiet lands beyond the sea;  
First to bring back the great good messages  
Of joy, and first to taste the good wild scent.  
O creature of pure joy,  
Come in your garments white and black, fly  
hither,  
And bring your springtide gladness to our dance !



## ALTICHIARA.

March comes, and February  
Goes with the wind to-day;  
Bring out your taffety  
And put the vair away.  
And come with me, I pray,  
Across the streams in flood,  
Under the branching wood that leans along,  
With dancing and with song in company  
With fleet-foot lovers, or upon the lea  
Gather the violets,  
Where the grass smells more sweet because her  
feet,  
Have passed that way, the naked feet of  
Spring!

## GARSEND.

To-day the earth appears  
New-wedded like a girl;  
The face that the sea wears  
To-day is like a pearl.  
Hark, hark, is that the merle  
Deep in the thicket? Hark,  
How swift upsoars the lark into the sky!  
The cruel wind goes by, and in his mouth  
Bears ravished nests! O swallow of the south,  
Thy tail's an arrow feather,  
And like the twanging of a bow thy cry  
Whereby the spring will strike, the hands of  
Spring!

## BIANCOFIORE.

O creature of delight,  
Lead thou the dancing feet,  
In robe of black and white,

As is thy usage sweet.  
 Make here thy stay, O fleet  
 Swallow, here in this room  
 Wherein is seen, in gloom or light of day,  
 The tale of Iseult, the fair flower of Ireland,  
 As here thou seest, and this shall be thy gar-  
     land,  
 Thy nest, no prison-mesh,  
 Seeing that the fresh fair lady seated here  
 Is not Francesca, but is very—

[The DANCERS return rapidly, towards FRANCESCA and form in a line, stretching out towards her the hand that holds the swallow, and the other; and they all sing with BIANCOFIORE, without interval, the last word of the stanza.]

ALL

Spring!

[At the beginning of the last movement the SLAVE appears on the threshold. As the MUSICIANS play the last notes, she goes up to FRANCESCA hurriedly and whispers to her something that suddenly disturbs her.]

FRANCESCA

(Impetuously).

Biancofiore, Altichiara, Alda, Adonella,  
 Garsenda, for the new  
 Delight of this new dance,  
 I must give you something new :  
 These dresses, take them, each!

[She picks up some of the scattered goods and gives them.]

Here's for you, and for you!

[The JESTER comes forward in a sidelong way.]  
And for you too,

Gian Figo, but no jesting.

[The JESTER takes it and decamps.]  
Garsenda, take this too for the Musicians,  
They can make jackets of it,  
With stripes of red and yellow. And see, too,  
Merchant

You set aside two lengths of some good serge  
For Maestro Almodoro, and Maestro Isacco.  
Now go, I have given you something, all of you,  
For the March calends' sake. Go now, and,  
going,  
Sing in the court the song of the March swallows.

You must come back again, Merchant; Garsenda  
Will bring you word. You may leave your  
wares here now.

Go, and be merry, until vesper-time;  
Adonella, lead the way into the court.  
A happy spring to you!

[The MUSICIANS come down from their gallery, playing, and go out. The JESTER skips after them. ALL the others bow before FRANCESCA and take the gifts they have received, following the MUSICIANS with whispering and laughter. The SLAVE remains, busy wrapping up the wares in bundles. FRANCESCA abandons herself to her anxiety. She takes several steps, blindly; with a sudden movement, she draws the curtains of the alcove, which are half open, showing the bed. Then she sits down be-

*fore the reading-desk, and glances at the open book, but, in turning, the train of her dress catches in the lute, which falls, and lies on the ground. She trembles.]*

No, no, Smaragdi! Run, and tell him not  
To come!

*[The sounds die away in the distance. The SLAVE, having finished, goes towards the door. FRANCESCA takes a step towards her as if to call her back.]*

Smaragdi!

*[The SLAVE goes out.]*

*[After a few moments, a hand raises the curtain, and PAOLO MALATESTA appears. The door closes behind him]. As PAOLO and FRANCESCA gaze at one another, for a moment, without finding words, both change colour. The sound of MUSIC dies away through the palace. The room is gilded by the rays of the setting sun, which shine through the long window.]*

FRANCESCA.

Welcome, my lord and kinsman.

PAOLO

I have come,  
Hearing a sound of music, to bring greetings,  
My greetings of return.

FRANCESCA.

You have come back  
Speedily, sir; indeed with the first swallow.  
My women even now  
Were singing a new song that they have made

To welcome March. And there was also here  
The merchant out of Florence, who had come  
Among your following. Of him I had  
Tidings of you.

PAOLO .

But I, of you, no tidings,  
None, I heard nothing there,  
Nothing of you at all,  
From that day onward, when, one perilous  
night  
You put a cup of wine into my hands,  
And said to me, "farewell!"  
And said to me, "God-speed!"

FRANCESCA.

I have no memory,  
My lord, concerning this. I have prayed much.

PAOLO.

You have forgotten then?

FRANCESCA.

I have prayed much.

PAOLO.

And I have suffered much.  
If it be true that he who suffers conquers,  
I think I must needs conquer. . . .

FRANCESCA.

What?

PAOLO.

My fate,

Francesca.

FRANCESCA.

And yet you have come back?

PAOLO.

I have come back

To live.

FRANCESCA.

Not to die now?

PAOLO.

Ah, you remember

The death I was to die,  
And you that would not! So much, at the least,  
You have remembered.

*[She draws back towards the window, as if withdrawing herself from his scarcely repressed violence.]*

FRANCESCA.

Paolo, give me peace!

It is so sweet a thing to live forgetting,  
But one hour only, and be no more tossed,  
Out of the tempest.  
Do not call back, I pray,  
The shadow of that time in this fresh light  
That slakes my thirst at last  
Like that long draught  
That at the ford I drank,  
Out of the living water.  
And now, I desire now  
To think my soul has left  
That shore to come into this sheltering shore,  
Where music and where hope are sisters; so  
To forget all the sorrow that has been  
Yesterday, and shall be  
To-morrow, and so let  
All of my life, and all the veins of it,  
And all the days of it,

And all old things in it, far-away things,  
But for one hour, one hour,  
Slip away quietly, a quiet tide,  
Unto that sea,  
Even these eyes might behold smilingly,  
Were it not hidden by the tears that tremble  
And do not fall. O peace, peace in that sea  
That was so wild with waves  
Yesterday, and to-day is like a pearl.  
Give me peace!

PAOLO.

It is the voice of spring  
I hear, and from your lips the music runs  
Over the world, that I have seemed to hear,  
Riding against the wind,  
Sing in the voice of the wind,  
At every turn of the way,  
At every glade, and high  
On the hill-tops, and on the edges of the woods,  
And under them the streams,  
When my desire bent back,  
Burning with breath, the mane of my wild horse,  
Over the saddle-bow, and the soul lived,  
In the swiftness of that flight,  
On swiftness,  
Like a torch carried in the wind, and all  
The thoughts of all my soul, save one, save one,  
Were all blown backward, spent  
Like sparks behind me.

FRANCESCA.

Ah, Paolo, like sparks  
All your words are, and still they take no rest,  
And all your soul lives still

In the strong wind and swiftness of your coming,  
And drags me with it, and I am full of fear.  
I pray you, I pray you now,  
That you will give me peace  
For this hour only,  
My fair friend, my sweet friend,  
That I may quiet and put to sleep in me  
The old sick pain, and forget all the rest;  
Only bring back into my eyes the first.  
Look that took hold on me out of your face,  
Unknown to me ; for these dry eyelids have  
No need of any healing but that dew,  
Only to bring back and to have in them  
Again the miracle of that first look ;  
And they will feel that grace has come to them,  
As they felt once, out of the heart of a dream,  
The coming near of the dawn ;  
And feel that they are to be comforted,  
Perhaps in the shade  
Of the new garland.

PAOLO.

And so garlanded  
With violets I saw you yesterday  
In a meadow, as I stayed,  
Pausing in journeying,  
And being alone, and having far outstripped  
My escort. I could hear  
Only the champing bit  
Of my horse pasturing, and see from there  
The towers of Meldola in a wood. And all  
Palpitated with you  
In the high morning. And you came to me  
With violets, and returning to your lips



I heard again a word that you had spoken,  
Saying : I pardon you, and with much love!

FRANCESCA.

That word was spoken  
And perfect joy awaits upon the word.

[PAOLO'S eyes wander over the room.]

Ah, do not look around  
Upon these things,  
Silent, as if with joy,  
And only full of sorrow and of shame.  
No autumn withered them,  
They shall not be awakened with the spring.  
Look on the sea, the sea  
That has borne witness for us once with God  
To certain words once spoken, vast and calm  
And shining where the battle came between,  
And silent where the rage of clamour came  
Between, and one sail passed upon the sea,  
Going alone upon its way, like this,  
See, yonder? And our souls  
Were tried, as if with fire.  
But now sit here, upon the window-seat,  
And not with weapons now for killing men,  
But without cruelty. See, Paolo,  
With this mere sprig of basil.

[*She takes a cluster from her head, and offers it to him; as he steps nearer, his foot strikes against the catch of the trap-door, and he stops.*]

You have struck your foot  
Against the ring of the trap-door. It leads  
From here into another room beneath.

[PAOLO stoops to look at it.]

PAOLO.

Ah, you can go from here into a room  
Beneath.

FRANCESCA

[*Giving him the sprig of basil*].

Come, take it, smell it; it is good.  
Smaragdi planted it in memory  
Of Cyprus, in this vase;  
And when she waters it,  
She sings: "Under your feet  
I spread sweet basil,  
I bid you sleep there,  
I bid you pluck it,  
I bid you smell it,  
And remember the giver!"  
At Florence all the women  
Have their sweet basil on the window-sill.  
Do you not know? But come,  
Will you not tell me something of your life?  
Sit here, and tell me something of yourself,  
How you have lived.

PAOLO.

Why do you ask of me  
To live the misery of my life twice over?  
All that was joy to others was to me  
Sorrow and heaviness. One only thing,  
Music, could ever give me pleasant hours.  
I went sometimes to a great singer's house,  
He was by name Casella,  
And there were met many of gentle birth,  
Among them Guido Cavalcanti, and these  
Were wont to make rhymes in the vulgar tongue;  
And there was Ser Brunetto,

Returned from Paris, wise  
With rhetoric of the schools,  
Also a youth  
Of the Alighieri, Dante was his name,  
And I much loved this youth, he was so full  
Of thoughts of love and sorrow,  
So burning and so loverlike for song.  
And something like a healing influence passed  
Out of his heart to mine,  
That seemed shut up in me; for the exceeding  
And too much sweetness hid  
Sometimes within the song moved him to weep  
Silently, silent tears,  
And seeing his weeping, I too wept with him.  
[*Her eyes fill with tears and her voice trembles.*]

FRANCESCA.

You wept?

PAOLO.

Francesca!

FRANCESCA.

Wept? Ah, Paolo mine,  
 Blessed be he that taught your heart such tears,  
 Such tears! I will pray always for his peace.  
 For now I see you, now I see you again  
 As you were then, sweet friend.  
 The grace has come with healing to my eyes.

[ *She appears as if transfigured with perfect joy. With a slow movement she takes the garland from her head and lays it on the open book beside her* ].

PAOLO.

Why do you take the garland from your head?

FRANCESCA.

Because it was not you who gave it me.  
I gave you once a rose  
From that sarcophagus.  
But now, poor flowers, I feel  
Your freshness is all spent!

[PAOLO rises, and goes up to the reading desk  
and touches the violets.]

PAOLO.

'Tis true! Do you remember? on that night  
Of fire and blood, you asked of me the gift  
Of a fair helmet; and I gave it you:  
'Twas finely tempered.  
The steel and gold of it have never known  
What rust is, soiling. And you let it fall.  
Do you remember?  
I picked it up, and I have held it dear  
As a king's crown.  
Since then, when I have set it on my head,  
I feel twice bold, and there is not a thought  
Within my heart that is not as a flame.

[He bends over the book.]

Ah, listen, the first words that meet my eye!  
"Made richer by that gift than had you given  
him  
The gift of all the world."  
What book is this?

FRANCESCA.

The famous history  
Of Lancelot of the Lake.

[She rises and goes over to the reading-desk.]

PAOLO.

And have you read  
The book all through?

FRANCESCA.

I have but  
Come in my reading to this point.

PAOLO.

To where?

Here, where the mark is?

[*He reads.*]

“ . . . . but you ask of me  
Nothing . . . . ” Will you go on?

FRANCESCA.

Look how the sea is growing white with light!

PAOLO.

Will you not read the page with me, Francesca?

FRANCESCA.

Look yonder, how a flight  
Of swallows comes, and coming sets a shadow  
On the white sea!

PAOLO.

Will you not read, Francesca?

FRANCESCA.

And there is one sail, and so red it seems  
Like fire.

PAOLO

[*Reading.*]

“ ‘ Assuredly, my lady ’ says  
Thereat Galeotto, ‘ he is not so hot,  
He does not ask you any single thing  
For love of you, because he fears, but I  
Make suit to you for him; and know that I

Had never asked it of you, but that you  
Were better off for it, seeing it is  
The richest treasure you shall ever compass.'  
Whereat says she . . . . ."

[PAOLO *draws* FRANCESCA *gently by the hand.*]

But now, will you not read  
What she says? Will you not be Guenevere?  
See now how sweet they are,  
Your violets  
That you have cast away! Come, read a little.

[*Their heads lean together over the book.*]

FRANCESCA

[*Reading.*]

"Whereat says she: 'This know I well, and I  
Will do whatever thing you ask of me.'  
And Galeotto answers her: 'Much thanks,  
Lady! I ask you that you give to him  
Your love . . . . .'"

[*She stops.*]

PAOLO.

But read on.

FRANCESCA.

No, I cannot see

The words.

PAOLO.

Read on. It says: "Assuredly . . . . ."

FRANCESCA.

"'Assuredly,' says she, 'I promise it,  
But let him be mine own and I all his,  
And let there be set straight all crooked things  
And evil . . . . .'" Enough, Paolo.

PAOLO

*[Reading : hoarsely and tremulously.]*

“ ‘Lady!’ says he, ‘much thanks, but kiss him then,

Now, and before my face, for a beginning  
Of a true love . . . . ’ ” You, you! what does  
she say ?

Now, what does she say? Here.

*[Their white faces lean over the book, until their  
cheeks almost touch.]*

FRANCESCA

*[Reading].*

“Says she : ‘For what  
Shall I be then entreated. But I will it  
More than he wills it . . . ’ ”

PAOLO

*[Following brokenly].*

“And they draw apart

And the queen looks on him and sees that he  
Cannot take heart on him to do aught more.  
Thereat she takes him by the chin, and slowly  
Kisses him on the mouth . . . . ’ ”

*[HE makes the same movement towards FRANCESCA, and kisses her. As their mouths separate, FRANCESCA staggers and falls back on the cushions.]*

FRANCESCA

*[Faintly].*

No, Paolo!

## ACT IV.

*An octagonal hall, of gray stone, with five of its sides in perspective. High up, on the bare stone, is a frieze of unicorns on a gold background. On the wall at the back is a large window with glass panes, looking out on the mountain, furnished with benches in the recess. On the wall at right angles to it, on the right, is a grated door leading to the subterranean prison. Against the opposite wall, to the left, is a long wooden seat with a high back, in front of which is a long narrow table laid with fruit and wine. In each of the other two sides facing, is a door; the left, near the table, leads to the room of FRANCESCA, the right to the corridor and stairs. All round are placed torchbearers of iron; on brackets are hung shoulder-belts, waist-belts, quivers, and different portions of armour; pikes, lances, halberds, spears, axes, balistas lean against them. [FRANCESCA is seated at the window, and MALATESTINO stands at her feet.]*

FRANCESCA.

You would be justicer, Malatestino !  
Your cradle, of a surety, was hewn out



From some old tree-trunk by a savage axe  
That had cut many heads off before then.

MALATESTINO

[*laughs convulsively*].

Kinswoman, do I fright you?  
And should I please you better  
If I had had my cradle in the rose  
Of a calm lute?

FRANCESCA.

You are a cruel boy to take revenge  
Upon a falcon!  
Why did you kill him, if you held him dear?

MALATESTINO.

Merely for justice' sake.  
See, I had let him loose upon a crane,  
The crane went up, the falcon followed him  
And went up far above him, and under him  
Saw a young eagle flying, and he took him  
And struck him to the ground, and held him so  
Till he had killed him.  
I ran to take him, thinking him the crane,  
But found it was an eagle.  
Then I was angry, and struck off the head  
Of the fair falcon who had killed his lord.

FRANCESCA.

It was a foolish deed.

MALATESTINO.

But he had killed

His lord. I did but justice.

FRANCESCA.

It was a wicked folly, Malatestino.

MALATESTINO.

The fool shall pass, and with the fool his folly,  
And the time passes, but not every time.

FRANCESCA.

Why do you speak so strangely?  
You are athirst for blood  
Always, always at watch,  
The enemy of all things. In all your words  
There is a secret menace;  
Like a wild beast you bite  
And tear and claw whatever comes your way.  
Where were you born? Your mother gave you  
milk  
As to another? And you are so young!  
The down is scarcely shadowed on your cheek.

MALATESTINO

*[With sudden violence].*

You are a goad to me,  
The thought of you is like a goad to me,  
Always. You are my wrath.

*[FRANCESCA rises and moves away from the window, as if to escape from a snare. She stands near the wall against which arms are heaped up.]*

FRANCESCA.

Malatestino, enough! Have you no shame?  
Your brother will be here.

MALATESTINO

*[following her].*

You strain me like a bow,  
That vibrates in an hour  
A thousand times, and pierces at a venture.

Your hand is terrible,  
That holds my force in it,  
And casts it out to wound where it has flown.  
I fly you, and you follow.  
You are with me suddenly,  
Like a sharp storm of rain,  
In the fields and on the ways,  
When I go out  
Against the enemy.  
I breathe you when I breathe the dust of battles.  
The cloud that rises from the trampled earth  
Takes on your very form,  
And you live and breathe and you dissolve again  
Under the pawing of the panting horses  
In the tracks that redden and fill up with blood.  
I will clasp you, I will clasp you now at last!

[FRANCESCA retreats along the wall until she  
comes to the grated door.]

FRANCESCA.

You do not touch me, madman, or I call  
Your brother! Get you gone. I pity you.  
You are a boy. If you would not be whipped,  
Get you gone. You are a boy,  
A wicked boy.

MALATESTINO.

Whom would you call?

FRANCESCA.

Your brother.

MALATESTINO.

Which?

[FRANCESCA starts, hearing a cry rise up from  
below, through the door against which she is  
standing.]

FRANCESCA.

Who cried there? Did you not hear it?

MALATESTINO.

One

Who has to die.

FRANCESCA.

Montagna

Dei Parcitadi?

[*Another cry comes from the prison.*]

MALATESTINO.

I too will say: Enough!

Enough, Francesca, to-day you seal your fate.

FRANCESCA.

Ah, now I cannot hear him; but at night

He howls, howls like a wolf;

His crying rises to me in my room.

What have you done to him?

Have you put him to the torture?

MALATESTINO.

Listen to me. Giovanni

Sets out at Vespers for the Podesteria

Of Pesaro. You have prepared for him

Food for the journey.

[*He points to the table.*]

Listen. I can give him  
Food for another journey.

FRANCESCA.

What do you mean?

MALATESTINO.

Look well at me. I can still see with one.

FRANCESCA.

What do you mean? You threaten me? You  
net

Some treachery against your brother.

MALATESTINO.

Treachery?

I would have thought, kinswoman, that such a  
word

Had burnt your tongue; I see

Your lips are scathless, though

A little paler. I but spoke at random.

My judgment was at fault. Only I say

This one time more . . . .

[*The crying of the PRISONER is again heard.*]

FRANCESCA

[*Trembling with horror*].

How he cries! How he cries!

Who tortures him, or what new agony

Have you found out for him?

Have you walled him up alive? Will he cry so

All his life long? Go, put an end to it,

And take him from his torture.

I will not hear his crying any more.

MALATESTINO.

Well, I will go. I will see that you shall have

A quiet night and an untroubled sleep,

Because to-morrow you must sleep alone,

While my good brother rides to Pesaro.

[*He goes up to the wall and chooses an axe from  
among the weapons piled up against it.*]

FRANCESCA.

What are you doing?

MALATESTINO.

I?

I would be justicer,  
And by your wish and will,  
Kinswoman.

[*He examines the blade of the weapon; then unbolts the barred door, which opens upon black darkness.*]

FRANCESCA.

You are going to kill him? Ah,  
Wild beast, but you have lived too long, I think,  
Since I bound up your wound for you, and you  
Raved at your father. Still I hear you. Then  
You bit the hand that gave you medicine,  
Cared for you in your sickness, soothed your  
pain.

Accursed be the hour in which I bent  
Over your pillow to give ease to you!

MALATESTINO.

Francesca, listen, Francesca: even so sure  
As death is in the point of this good weapon  
I hold here in my hand, so sure is life  
In that one word  
You still may say to me,  
Full-blooded life, do you not understand?  
And full of winds, and full of conquering days.  
[FRANCESCA replies slowly, in an equable voice,  
as in a momentary respite from horror and  
anxiety.]

FRANCESCA.

What is the word? Who is there that could say  
it?  
You live in a loud noise,

But where I live is silence. The prisoner  
Is not so far and lonely  
As you are far and lonely, O poor blind  
Slaughterman, drunk with shoutings, and with  
blows!

But fate is very silent.

MALATESTINO.

Ah, if you could but see the countenance  
Of the overhanging fate!  
There is a wretched knot within my head,  
A knot of thoughts like pent-up lightnings: soon  
They will break out. But listen,  
Listen! If your hand will but touch my hand,  
If your hair will lean over me again,  
Over my fever, and . . .

[*A more prolonged cry is heard from below.*]

FRANCESCA.

O horror! horror!

[*She moves back to the embrasure of the window,  
sits down, and puts her elbows on her knees,  
and her head between her hands.*]

MALATESTINO

[*Looking aside at her.*]

This shall be from you.

[*He takes down a torch, puts the axe on the  
ground, takes the steel, strikes it, and lights  
the torch, while he speaks.*]

I go. You will not hear him any more.  
I will see that you shall have  
A quiet night and an untroubled sleep,  
And I will give my father quiet too;

He fears his flight. And I would have Giovanni

In passing by Gradara, give him this  
Most certain token.

O kinswoman, good vespers!

FRANCESCA remains motionless as if hearing nothing.

*He picks up the weapon and goes into the darkness with his silent cat-like step, holding the lighted torch in his left hand. The little door remains open. FRANCESCA rises and watches the light fade away in the opening; suddenly she runs to the door, and stops, shuddering. The barred door grates in the silence. She turns, and moves away with slow steps, her head bent, as if under a heavy weight.]*

FRANCESCA

*[In a low voice, to herself].*

And an untroubled sleep!

*[Through the great door on the right is heard the harsh voice of GIANCIOTTO. FRANCESCA stops suddenly.]*

GIOVANNI.

Look you for Messer Paolo my brother,  
And tell him I set out for Pesaro  
In an hour's time from now,  
And that I wait him.

*[He enters fully armed. Seeing his wife, he goes up to her.]*

Ah my dear lady, you are waiting me!  
Why do you tremble, why are you so pale?

*[He takes her hands.]*



And you are cold too, cold as if with fear.  
But why?

FRANCESCA.

Malatestino

Had scarcely entered when I heard again  
The crying of the prisoner,  
Who cries these many days so horribly  
Out of the earth; and, seeing me distraught,  
Flamed into anger and went suddenly  
Down to the prison by the door there, armed  
With a great axe, saying that he would kill him,  
Against the express commandments of his father  
That fretted him too much.  
Cruel he is, your brother, my good lord,  
And does not love me.

GIANCIOTTO.

Do not tremble, lady.

Where has your valiance gone? But now you  
were

Fearless among the fighters,  
And saw men fall with arrows in their throats,  
And flung about the Greek fire in your hands.  
Why does the life then of an enemy  
So greatly trouble you? and a cry affright you,  
Or an axe brandished?

FRANCESCA.

To fight in battle is a lovely thing,  
But secret slaying in the dark I hate.

GIANCIOTTO.

Malatestino tired of keeping watch  
So long, and so long waiting for the ransom  
That the old Parcitade would not pay,

The old foul miser that in taking flight  
Took with him certain rights and privileges  
Of the Commune at Rimino . . . But why  
Do you say he does not love you?

FRANCESCA.

I do not know. It seems so.

GIANCIOTTO.

Is he unkind with you?

FRANCESCA.

He is a boy, and like  
Young mastiffs, he must bite. But come, my  
lord,  
Take food and drink  
Before you go your journey.

GIANCIOTTO.

But perhaps

Malatestino . . .

FRANCESCA.

Come, why do you think  
Of what I said but lightly? "Heart of metal,  
Tough liver:" I remember your own word,  
And when you said it. He will love his horse  
Until the horse falls sick;  
His armour, till the steel begins to wear.  
I have no mind to trouble you with him,  
My lord. 'Tis almost vespers.  
Come, here is food and drink. Do you mean to  
go  
The way of the seashore?

[GIANCIOTTO is moody, while he follows FRANCESCA towards the spread table. He takes off his basnet, unclasps his gorget, and gives

*them to his wife, who sets them down on a seat, with sudden graceful movements, talking rapidly].*

You will have all the freshness of the night.  
It is September, and the nights are soft;  
Just before midnight the moon rises. When  
Do you reach Pesaro,  
Messere il Podestà?

GIANCIOTTO.

To-morrow at the third hour,  
For I must stay a little with my father  
In passing through Gradara.  
[*He unbuckles his sword-belt and gives it to his wife.*]

FRANCESCA.

Is it for long that you must stay at Pesaro,  
Before you come again?

[*The terrible cry of MONTAGNA is heard from below. FRANCESCA shudders, and lets fall the sword, which slips from its scabbard.*]

GIANCIOTTO.

It is done now.

Do not be frightened, lady. There will be  
Nothing but silence now. May God so take  
The heads of all our enemies! From this forth  
There shall no wind root into Rimino  
This evil seed between the stones of it.  
And may God scatter it out of all Romagna  
In this most bloody year, if it so be  
He wills to have his holy Easter held  
By the Guelfs of Calboli with the Ghibelline  
blood

Of Aldobrandin degli Argogliosi!

[*He stoops and picks up the bare blade.*]

Pope

Martino is dead and good King Carlo went

Before him into paradise. That's ill!

As for this Pietro di Stefano that Onorio

Sends us for governor,

I doubt him, he's no friend,

He's not a Polentani, not your father's,

Francesca. We shall still have need to keep

Our swords unsheathed, and eyes in all our  
swords.

[*He puts himself on guard, then looks along the  
blade from the hilt.*]

This is inflexible!

[*He puts it back in its scabbard.*]

FRANCESCA.

Give it to me, my lord,

I will not let it fall

Twice over. And sit down, take food and drink.

[*He gives her the sword and sits down on the  
bench before the table.*]

GIANCIOTTO.

Good so, my own dear lady.

I talk of war to you, and now I think

That I have never given you a flower.

Ah, we are hard. I give you arms in heaps

To hold in those white hands,

Malatestino gave to you at least

A falcon. Paolo gives you

Flowers perhaps. The Captain of the People

Learnt all the courteous virtues in his Florence,

But left his force upon the banks of Arno  
And now is more in love with idleness  
Than any labour. He is always with  
His music-makers.

[*He breaks the bread and pours out the wine,  
while FRANCESCA sits besides him, at the  
table, with her hands on the hilt of the sword.*]

But you,

Francesca, love your chamber-music too.  
Are not your women ever tired of singing?  
Their voices must have covered  
The cries of Parcitade,  
Surely? You turn the tower  
Of the Malatesti  
Into a singing wood of nightingales.

[*He eats and drinks.*]

FRANCESCA.

I and Samaritana,  
My sister, at Ravenna, in our home,  
Lived always, always in the midst of singing.  
Our mother had indeed a throat of gold.  
From our first infancy  
Music flowed over us and bent our souls  
As the water bends the grass upon the bank.  
And our mother said to me :  
Sweet singing can put out all harmful things.

GIANCIOTTO.

My mother said to us.  
Do you know what woman is a proper woman?  
She that in spinning thinks upon the spindle,  
She that in spinning spins without a knot,  
She that in spinning lets not fall the spindle,

She that winds thread in order about thread,  
 She that knows when the spindle is full or half-  
 way.

FRANCESCA.

Then why did you not seek for such a woman,  
 My lord, through all the country?

[*A knocking is heard at the little barred door.*

FRANCESCA rises to her feet, drops the sword  
 on the table and turns to go out.]

Malatestino back!

I will not wait to see him.

THE VOICE OF MALATESTINO.

Who has shut it?

Kinswoman are you there? Have you shut me  
 in?

[*He kicks at the door.*]

GIANCIOTTO.

Wait, wait, and I will open!

THE VOICE OF MALATESTINO.

Ah, Giovanni!

Open, and I will bring you  
 A good ripe heavy fruit,  
 Food for your journey:  
 A ripe September fig.  
 And how it weighs!

[GIANCIOTTO goes to the door to open it. FRANCESCA follows his limping steps for some instants with her eyes, then moves towards the door that leads to her rooms, and goes out.]

Be quick!

GIANCIOTTO.

Why, here I am.

[*He opens the door, and MALATESTINO appears in the narrow doorway holding in his left hand the lighted torch, in his right, by a knotted cord, the head of MONTAGNA wrapped in a cloth.*]

MALATESTINO

[*Handing the torch to his brother.*]

Here, brother, put it out.

[*GIOVANNI stamps out the flame under his foot.*]

Was not your wife

With you?

GIANCIOTTO

[*Roughly.*]

She was with me?

What do you want of her?

MALATESTINO.

Ah, then you know

What fruit it is I am bringing to your table?

GIANCIOTTO.

Did you not fear to disobey our father?

MALATESTINO.

Feel how it weighs! now feel!

[*He hands the bundle to GIOVANNI, who weighs it in his hand, and lets it fall on the pavement with a dull thud.*]

It is yours; it is the head

Of Montagna dei Parcitadi; take it.

It is for your saddle bow,

For you to carry with you to Gadara

And leave it with our father, and say to him:

"Malatestino sends you  
This token, lest you doubt his guardianship,  
And pledges you his word  
He will not let the prisoner escape;  
And asks you in return  
The three foot black white-spotted horse you  
said  
That you would give him,  
With saddle set with gold."  
How hot it is!

[*He wipes the sweat from his forehead. GIANCIOTTO has seated himself again at the table.*]

I tell you,

When the light struck upon his eyes, he snorted,  
As a horse does when it shies. Give me to  
drink.

[*He drains a cup that stands full. GIANCIOTTO seems gloomy, and chews in silence, without swallowing, like an ox ruminating. The slayer of MONTAGNA sits where FRANCESCA had been sitting. The blood-stained bundle lies on the pavement; through the window can be seen the sun as it sets behind the Apennines, crimsoning the peaks and the clouds.*]

You are not wroth with me?  
You did not want to have us wait a year  
In hopes of ransom from the Perdecittade?  
I tell you we should not have had the ransom,  
Sure as a florin's yellow.  
From this day backwards  
The Malatesti never have given quarter,  
Since they first cut their teeth.  
It is not two months now, at Cesena, our father



Just saved his skin by a mere miracle  
From the clutches of Corrado Montefeltvo,  
And the bastard Filipuccio is still living!  
Heaven bless and save  
Frate Alberigo,  
Who knows full well the way to spare at once  
Both trunk and branches!  
It is time now for every Ghibelline  
To come to his desert,  
As the gay Knight would have us.

*[He takes the sword lying across the table, and  
strikes the scabbard with his hand.]*

And here is the dessert for every feast  
Of peace and amity.  
Do not be wroth with me,  
Giovanni, I am yours.  
Are you not called the Lamester  
And am I not the One-eyed? . . .

*[He is silent an instant, deceitfully.]*

But Paolo is the Beautiful!

*[GIANCIOTTO lifts his head and gazes fixedly at  
MALATESTINO. In the silence is heard the  
jingling of his spurs as he moves his foot  
restlessly on the floor.]*

GIANCIOTTO.

You are a babbler too?

*[MALATESTINO is about to pour out more wine.  
His brother arrests his hand.]*

No, do not drink,  
But answer me. What is it you have done  
To vex Francesca?  
What have you done to her?

MALATESTINO.

I! What is it she says?

GIANCIOTTO.

You have changed colour.

MALATESTINO.

What is it she says?

GIANCIOTTO.

Answer me now!

MALATESTINO.

[*Pretending to be confused.*]

I cannot answer you.

GIANCIOTTO.

What do you harbour against her in your mind?

MALATESTINO

[*With a gleam in his eye*].

She told you this? And did she not change  
colour

While she was saying it?

GIANCIOTTO.

Enough, Malatestino!

Look at me in the eyes.

I limp in going, but I go straight before me.

You go a crooked way, and you smooth out

The sound your feet have made. Only, take  
heed

I do not set my hand upon you. There

You would writhe your best in vain.

So now I say to you:

Woe to you if you touch my lady! You,

You should know, having seen me at the work,

That a less time it is

Between the touch of the spur and the first leap  
Of the Barbary horse  
Than between my saying and doing. Think of it.

MALATESTINO

[*In a low voice, with downcast eye*].

And if the brother sees that there is one  
That touches of a truth his brother's wife,  
And is incensed at it, and stirs himself  
To wipe the shame out, does he therefore sin?  
And if, for this, he is accused to have  
Harboured ill thought against the woman, say:  
Is the accusation just?

[*GIANCIOOTTO springs up and raises his fists as if to crush the youth. But he restrains himself, his arms fall.*]

GIANCIOOTTO

Malatestino, scourge of hell, if you  
Would have me not put out  
The other eye by which your blinking soul  
Offends the world, speak now,  
And tell me what it is that you have seen.

[*MALATESTINO rises and goes with his silent, cat-like steps to the door near the table. He listens for some instants; then opens the door suddenly with a swift movement, and looks. He sees no one. He goes back to his brother's side.*

Speak.

MALATESTINO.

Not for threats. You frighten me, I say.  
Because I wore no visor, I was made  
Blind of one eye; but you must wear indoors

Visor and headpiece, chin-piece, eye-piece, all  
Of tempered steel, without a flaw in it!  
You will see nothing, nothing can come through  
The iron-barred approaches to your brain.

GIANCIOTTO.

Come, come, the thing! None of your talk!  
The thing!

Tell me what you have seen! Tell me the man!

MALATESTINO.

Were you nowise surprised  
When some one who had gone away from here  
No later than December, suddenly  
Gave up his post at Florence  
And was already back by February?

[*One of the silver cups is heard to crack, as it is  
crushed in GIANCIOTTO's hand.*]

GIANCIOTTO.

Paolo? No, no. It is not.

[*He rises, leaves the table, and walks to and fro  
in the room, grimly, with overclouded eyes.  
He stumbles against the blood-stained bundle.  
He goes towards the window, whose  
panes glitter in the light of the setting sun.  
He sits down on the window-seat, and takes  
his head between his hands, as if to collect  
his thoughts. MALATESTINO plays with the  
sword, drawing it half in and half out of the  
scabbard.*]

Malatestino, here!

[*The youth comes across to him swiftly, almost  
without sound, as if his feet were shod with  
felt. GIANCIOTTO enfolds him in his arms,*

*and holds him tightly between his armoured knees, and speaks to him breath to breath.]*

Are you sure? Have you seen this?

MALATESTINO.

Yes.

GIANCIOTTO.

How and when?

MALATESTINO.

I have seen him often enter . . .

GIANCIOTTO.

Enter where?

MALATESTINO.

Enter the room.

GIANCIOTTO.

Well? That is not enough.

He is a kinsman. They might talk together.  
There are the women . . . You have seen him  
go

With the musicians, it may be . . .

MALATESTINO.

At night.

For God's sake, do not hurt me! Not so hard!  
You have your iron gauntlets. Let me go.

*[He writhes in his grasp.]*

GIANCIOTTO.

Have I heard right? You said . . .

Say it again.

MALATESTINO.

At night,

At night, I say, I have seen him.

GIANCIOTTO.

If you should lie, I will break  
Your body in two.

MALATESTINO.

At night,  
I have seen him enter, and go out at dawn.  
You were in arms against the Urbinati.

GIANCIOTTO.

I will break you, if you lie.

MALATESTINO.

Would you like to see and feel?

GIANCIOTTO.

I must do so.  
If you have any will to go alive  
Out of these mortal pincers.

MALATESTINO.

Then, to-night?

GIANCIOTTO.

To-night, then.

MALATESTINO.

But can you find out the way  
To cheat, to smile? Ah, no, you cannot smile.

GIANCIOTTO.

Let my revenge teach me the way to smile,  
If my delight could never.

MALATESTINO.

Can you kiss  
Both, one after the other, and not bite  
Instead?

GIANCIOTTO.

Yes, I will kiss them, thinking them  
Already dead.

MALATESTINO.

You must put both your arms  
About them, you must talk to them, and not  
Tremble.

GIANCIOOTTO.

Ah, you are playing with my sorrow!  
Beware! it has two edges.

MALATESTINO.

Do not hurt me,  
For God's sake!

GIANCIOOTTO.

Good; but tell me how you think:  
The way, and speedily.

MALATESTINO.

You must take your leave,  
And go from here, take horse, and by the gate  
Of San Genesio with all your escort  
Set out for Pesaro. I will come with you.  
You will say you are wroth with me  
For the Parcitade's head's sake, and desire  
To take me to our father at Gradara,  
That he may punish me or pardon me.  
So they will think  
That they are left alone. Do you understand?  
Then, half-way through the night,  
We will leave the escort, and come back again,  
And enter by the gate of the Gattolo  
Before the moon is up. We will give the signal  
To Rizio. But let me dispose of that.  
Saddle your swiftest horse, and take with you  
A little linen  
To bind about his hoofs, in case of need,

Because at night the stones  
Upon the noisy way  
May well be traitors, brother.

GIANCIOOTTO.

Then shall I see?

You are sure? Then I shall take them in the  
act . . . .

MALATESTINO.

Not so hard! Now I think,  
There is the slave, there is the Cyprian  
slave . . . .

She is their go-between.

Sly is she, works with charms . . . .

I have seen her as she goes

Snuffing the wind. . . . I must find a way to  
lead her

Into a snare, and blindfold her. But this,  
Leave this to me: you need not think of any-  
thing

Till you are at the door.

GIANCIOOTTO.

On your life now, shall I take them in the act?

MALATESTINO.

Enough of this, by God!

Let me go, now, let me go! I am not

Your prey.

[*Through the door is heard the voice of PAOLO.*]

PAOLO

[*Outside.*]

Where is Giovanni?

[GIANCIOOTTO *lets MALATESTINO go, and rises  
with a white face.*]



MALATESTINO.

Look to it now,

Look to it; no suspicion!

[As PAOLO opens the door and enters, MALATESTINO pretends to be angry with GIANCIOTTO.]

Ah, at last

You have let me go!

[He pretends to suffer in his wrists.]

By God, it is well for you

You were born my elder brother, otherwise. . . .

Ah, Paolo, well met!

[PAOLO wears a long rich surtout falling below his knees nearly to the ankle, girt at the waist by a jewelled belt through which is thrust a beautiful damascened dagger. His curled hair, not parted, but waving in a mass, surrounds his face like a cloud.]

PAOLO.

What is the matter?

MALATESTINO.

See,

Giovanni is enraged

Because I have lost all patience at the last  
And have struck dumb Montagna, being weary  
Of listening to his cries (Francesca too  
Could get no sleep) and weary too of hearing  
My father say twice over,  
By word of mouth and message;  
"Will you keep watch on him?  
Are you sure you can keep watch?  
I know he will escape;

I know that you will let him go, and then,  
When he has gone, you will not bring him  
back!"

By God, I was tired of it. There is his head.

PAOLO.

You cut it off yourself?

MALATESTINO.

Yes, I myself,

And neatly.

[PAOLO looks at the bundle, but draws back so  
as not to stain himself with the dripping  
blood.]

Ah, you draw back, it seems  
You fear to stain your garments?  
I did not know I had  
Two sisters, both so dainty!

GIANCIOTTO.

Enough of jesting! Paolo,  
I have to take him with me to Gradara,  
To our father; he must plead  
His cause himself,  
For disobeying. What do you say to it?

PAOLO.

I say that it is well for him to go,  
Giovanni.

MALATESTINO.

I am content.

But I must bear the token;  
I will hang it to my saddle: that is staunch.  
[He takes up the bundle by the cord.]

I have no fear our father will be angry.  
He will be filled with joy,

I tell you, when the knots are all untied.  
And he will give me the black horse for war,  
And maybe the grey jennet for the chase.

GIANCIOTTO.

Get ready then, and without lingering,  
It is already evening.

[MALATESTINO takes up the bundle to carry it  
away.]

PAOLO

[To GIOVANNI].

I see your men are armed at front and back,  
And wait the clarion.

[The two brothers go towards the window lit up  
by the sunset, and sit down.]

MALATESTINO

[Going].

Ah, but how heavy! and without a helmet!  
The Parcitadi always were gross oxen,  
Fatted for slaughtering, great horned heads.  
Ah, Paozzo, where you go  
You leave behind a scent of orange-water.  
Take care, a drop may drip upon your clothes.

[He goes out.]

PAOLO.

He is all teeth and claws, ready for biting.  
Our men at arms used once  
To say he always slept with one eye closed  
And one eye open, even in his sleep.  
Now I believe he never sleeps at all,  
Nor slacks the sinews of his cruelty.  
He was made to conquer lands, and die some  
day

Of extreme cold, God keep him, our good  
brother!

So you are Podestà of Pesaro!  
Our father from Gradara scans the hill  
Of Pesaro as if he watched his prey.  
You, with your strength and wisdom,  
Should give it to him soon,  
Giovanni.

GIANCIOOTTO.

It is not a year yet since  
You went to Florence, Captain of the People,  
And now I go as Podestà Not long  
You stayed at Florence. I shall stay there long,  
Because it is not well for me to yield  
The office to another. Yet to leave  
Francesca for so long,  
Goes to my heart a little.

PAOLO.

You can come back again from time to time,  
Pesaro is not far.

GIANCIOOTTO.

The Podestà is not allowed to leave  
His post, so long as lasts  
His office, as you know, nor bring with him  
His wife. But I will leave her in your care,  
Brother, my most dear wife; you will be here.

PAOLO.

I have held her always  
As a dear sister might be held.

GIANCIOOTTO.

I know,

Paolo.

PAOLO.

Be very sure  
That I will guard her for you well.

GIANCIOTTO.

I know,

Paolo. You from Ravenna  
Brought her a virgin to your brother's bed  
And you will keep her for me from all harm.

PAOLO.

I will tell Orabile  
To leave Ghaggiolo and come  
To Rimino to keep her company.

GIANCIOTTO.

See that they love each other, Paolo,  
For they are kinswomen.

PAOLO.

Francesca often  
Sends gifts to her.

GIANCIOTTO.

Go, call her. It is late.  
The sun has set, and I shall have to rest  
A little at Gradara,  
And yet be at the gates  
Of Pesaro before the third hour. Go,  
Go you yourself and call her. She has gone  
Back to her room, because Malatestino  
Frighted her with his cruelty. Go you,  
Comfort her, tell her not to be afraid  
Of being left alone, and call her here.

[*He rises and puts his hand lightly on his  
brother's shoulder as if to urge him. PAOLO  
goes towards the door. GIOVANNI stands*

*motionless, and follow him with murderous eyes. As he goes out, GIOVANNI stretches out his hand as if to swear an oath. Then he moves towards the table, and takes up the cracked cup, wishing to hide it. He turns, sees the little barred door still open, throws the cup into the darkness, and closes the door. At the other door FRANCESCA appears by the side of PAOLO.]*

FRANCESCA.

Pardon me, my dear lord,  
If I have left you hastily. You know  
The reason.

GIANCIOTTO.

My dear lady, I know well  
The reason, and I am sorry  
That you have had to suffer by the fault  
Of this sad brother. And I go to see  
Both to your peace and to his punishment,  
For I intend to take him to our father,  
For judgment at Gradara. He prepares  
Already to set forth. Within a little  
We shall have left the city.

FRANCESCA.

He will bear  
Ill-will against me, if you should accuse him  
Before his father. Pardon him, I pray.  
He is a boy.

GIANCIOTTO.

Yet, lady, it is better,  
For your sake, that he comes with me. I leave  
Paolo with you. Trust Paolo. His Orabile

Will come to stay with you at Rimino,  
And keep you company: he promises.  
Often from Pesaro  
I mean to send you messages, and hope  
Often to have the like from Rimino.

FRANCESCA.

Surely, my lord. You need not fear for me.

GIANCIOTTO.

Put every trouble freely from your mind,  
Let songs and music give you joy, and have  
Beautiful robes, and lovely odours. Not  
To Guido's daughter suits the spinning wheel.  
I know it. And I say  
My mother's saying but to make you smile.  
You are not angry with me?

FRANCESCA.

In your saying  
There seems to lie secret rebuke for me,  
My lord.

GIANCIOTTO.

A good old saying, that was born  
Within the dark walls of Verrucchio,  
That now are grown too narrow to hem in  
The Malatesi in our house to-day.  
If any spin, they spin  
Only the purple, and with golden distaffs.  
Come to my arms, my most dear lady!

[FRANCESCA goes up to him; he takes her in  
his arms and kisses her. PAOLO stands si-  
lent in the doorway.]

Now

I have to say farewell. Never so fair

You seemed to me, never so sweet. And yet  
I leave you.

[*He smooths her hair with his hand; then looses  
her.*]

O, my brother,  
Keep her in safety and heaven keep you both.  
Come, and pledge faith with me.

[*PAOLO goes up to him, and they embrace.*]

Where is my gorget?

FRANCESCA.

Here it is.

[*She gives it to him.*]

GIANCIOTTO

[*Putting it on.*]

Paolo, buckle it for me.

[*PAOLO buckles it on. FRANCESCA hands him  
the basnet.*]

Do you remember, brother,  
That night before the Mastra Tower, that bolt  
Out of a crossbow? You,  
Francesca, do you remember?  
It was at just this hour.  
Cignatta was killed then. To-day Montagna  
Joins him. 'Tis not a year.  
The house is silent now; then, all the towers  
Were crackling to the sky.

[*FRANCESCA takes the sword from the table and  
buckles his sword-belt.*]

Francesca, do you remember? Then you gave  
us



Wine, Scian wine, to drink. We drank together  
Out of one cup.

[*He is fully armed.*]

Now let me drink again!

FRANCESCA.

One of the cups is missing. There were two.  
Where is the other?

[*She looks to see if it has fallen.*]

GIANCIOTTO.

One will do for us

Still.

[*He pours out the wine and offers it to FRANCESCA.*]

And good luck God give you!

FRANCESCA.

I cannot drink

This wine, my lord. I am not used to it.

GIANCIOTTO.

Drink as you drank then, and pass on the cup  
That your kinsman may drink also, as he drank  
then.

[*FRANCESCA drinks and offers the cup to  
PAOLO, who takes it.*]

PAOLO.

Good luck to the Podestà of Pesaro!

[*He drinks throwing back his curled head.  
Through the door is heard the voice of  
MALATESTINO, who throws open the door,  
and appears in full armour. From the  
court is heard the sound of bugles.*]

MALATESTINO.

Ready, Giovanni? Hark, the clarion!  
To horse! To horse!

## ACT V.

*The room with the curtained alcove, the musicians' gallery, the lectern with the book closed. Four waxen torches burn in the iron candlestick; two tapers on the small table. The compartments of the long window are almost all open to the peaceful night air. The pot of basil is on the window-sill, and beside it is a gilt plate heaped with bunches of early grapes.*

[FRANCESCA is seen through the half-drawn curtains of the alcove, lying on the bed, on which she has laid herself without undressing. The WOMEN, who wear white fillets, are seated on low stools; they speak quietly, so as not to disturb their mistress. Near them, on a stool, are laid five silver lamps, which have gone out.]

ADONELLA.

She has fallen asleep. She dreams.

[BIANCOFIORE rises and goes softly up to the alcove, looks, then turns, and goes back to her seat.]

BIANCOFIORE.

How beautiful she is!

ALTICHIARA.

Summer is come; she grows  
In beauty with the summer.

ALDA,

Like ears of corn.

GARSENDA.

And like

Poppies.

BIANCOFIORE.

O, beautiful

Summer, go not away !

The nights begin to grow a little cool.

Do you feel the breeze ?

ALDA.

It comes

From the sea. Oh, the delight !

*[With her face to the window, she draws in a long  
breath]*

ADONELLA.

Lord Autumn comes our way

With grass and figs in his lap.

BIANCOFIORE.

September! Grape and fig begin to droop.

ALTICHIARA

*[Pointing to the plate].*

Here, Adonella, take

A bunch of grapes to strip.

ADONELLA.

You are too greedy.

ALTICHIARA.

Come, come, your mouth is watering for them.

*[ADONELLA takes a bunch of grapes from the  
plate, and goes back to her seat, holding the  
bunch in the air, while the others strip it of  
its grapes.]*

BIANCOFIORE.

It is like sweet muscatel.

ALDA.

Don't throw away the skin!

ALTICHIARA.

It is all good to eat, kernel and skin.

GARSENDA.

Here is a bitter kernel.

BIANCOFIORE.

Grown on the shady side.

ADONELLA.

How still it is!

ALDA.

How tranquil!

GARSENDA.

Listen! I hear a galley

Weigh anchor.

BIANCOFIORE.

For to-night

Madonna has no singing.

ALTICHIARA.

She is weary.

ALDA.

Why does the prisoner

Cry out no more?

GARSENDA.

Messer Malatestino has cut off

His head.

ALDA.

Is that the truth?

GARSENDA.

The truth; to-day, at Vespers.

ALDA.

How do you know?

GARSENDA.

Smaragdi told it me,  
And had seen him, too,  
Tie something huddled in a cloth to his saddle,  
When, with Messer Giovanni  
He mounted in the court. It was the head,  
The prisoner's head.

ADONELLA.

Where do they carry it?

ALTICHIARA.

To whom do they carry it?

BIANCOFIORE.

Now they are riding  
By the sea shore,  
Under the stars,  
They and the murdered  
Head!

ADONELLA.

Where will they have come?

ALDA.

They should have come  
To hell, and stayed there!

GARSENDA.

One can breathe in the house  
Now they are here no longer,  
The lame man and the blind man!

ALTICHIARA.

Hush! hush! let not Madonna  
Hear you.

GARSEDA.

She is hardly breathing.

ALDA.

Messer Paolo

Is back again?

ALTICHIARA.

Hush!

[FRANCESCA groans in her sleep].

ADONELLA.

She is wakening.

[*She throws the grape-stalk out of the window.*

BIANCOFIORE again rises, and goes up to  
the alcove, and looks.]

BIANCOFIORE.

No,

She is not awake; she is crying in her sleep.

ADONELLA.

She is dreaming.

ALDA.

O Garsenda, does she know

The prisoner is not crying any more

Because they have cut his head off?

GARSEDA.

Certainly

She knows.

BIANCOFIORE.

Perhaps she is dreaming of it now.

ADONELLA.

We must sit up to-night,  
Who knows to what hour?

ALDA.

Are you sleepy, Adonella?

ALTICHIARA.

Simonetto, the fifer, is waiting on the stairs!

ADONELLA.

Who waits for you, then? Suzzo, the falconer,  
With lure of pretty leather?

ALDA.

Hush! She is wakening.

BIANCOFIORE.

And did it bleed, Garsenda?

GARSENDA.

Bleed? What?

BIANCOFIORE.

That bundle at the saddle-bow?

GARSENDA.

I saw but dimly, for the court was dark.  
But this I know : Smaragdi had to wash  
The pavement, there, in the hall.

BIANCOFIORE.

Now they are nearing the Cattolica.

GARSENDA.

God keep them far away, and let them never  
Find their way back again!

BIANCOFIORE.

Think of the frightened horse  
Feeling the dead thing dangle in the night!

ADONELLA.

How sweetly the sweet basil smells by night!

ALTICHIARA.

How thick it grows; the pot

No longer holds it.

BIANCOFIORE.

You know, Garsenda, tell us

The story of Lisabetta of Messina,  
That loved a youth of Pisa, and how her brothers  
Killed him in secret, and she found his body  
And cut the head away  
From off the shoulders, set it in a pot,  
And earth with it, and planted  
A sprig of basil plant,  
And watered it with her tears,  
And saw it blossom so, out of her weeping.  
Tell us, Garsenda, very quietly  
While we are waiting.

[FRANCESCA gives a deeper groan, and turns as  
if half stifled on the bed. The WOMEN  
shiver.]

ALDA.

Listen,

She is crying in her sleep. It is some bad  
dream.

GARSENDA.

She is sleeping on her back; the nightmare  
weighs  
Upon her breast.

ALTICHIARA.

Shall we awake her?



BIANCOFIORE.

Evil

It is too suddenly  
To rouse the heart that sees.  
How should we know  
What truth she sees revealed?

ADONELLA.

The Slave interprets all her dreams to her.

[FRANCESCA utters a cry of terror, springs from the bed, and seems in the act to fly from some savage pursuit, throwing out her hands as if to unloose herself from some grasp.]

FRANCESCA.

No, no, it is not I, it is not I!  
Ah, ah, they seize me with their teeth! Help!  
help!  
They snatch my heart. Help, help!  
Paolo!

[She shudders, stops, and turns on herself, pale, and breathing with difficulty, while her WOMEN surround her in consternation, trying to comfort her.]

GARSEDA.

Madonna, Madouna, we are here, see, see,  
We are here, Madonna.

ALTICHIARA.

Do not be afraid!

ADONELLA.

There is no one here; there is no one here but we,  
Madonna. No one is harming you, Madonna,

FRANCESCA

[*Shivering*].

What have I said? Did I call?

O God, what have I done?

ALDA.

You have had some discomfutable dream,  
Madonna.

GARSENDA.

Now it is finished. We are here.

All's quiet.

FRANCESCA.

Is it late?

BIANCOFIORE.

The sweat is standing out upon your forehead.

[*She wipes it off.*]

FRANCESCA.

Is it night yet? Garsenda,  
Biancofiore, Alda, you are all in white.

GARSENDA.

It might perhaps be four hours after midnight,  
Madonna.

FRANCESCA.

Have I slept so long? Smaragdi,  
Where is Smaragdi?  
She has not come back yet?

BIANCOFIORE.

She has not come back.

FRANCESCA.

Why has she not come back?

BIANCOFIORE

When did you send her,

Madonna?

FRANCESCA.

Are you not mistaken? Sleep,  
Perhaps, deceived you, and you did not see her  
When she came in.

GARSEDA.

Madonna,

No, none of us closed eyelid;  
We watched beside you all the night.

ADONELLA.

Perhaps

She has come back, and waits, as she is wont  
Lying without the door.

FRANCESCA.

Look out and see,

Adonella, see if she is there.

[ADONELLA draws back the folds of the curtain  
opens the door, and looks out.]

ADONELLA.

Smaragdi!

Smaragdi! There is no answer.

No one is there. It is all dark.

FRANCESCA.

But call,

Call her again.

ADONELLA.

Smaragdi!

FRANCESCA.

Take a light.

[GARSENDA takes one of the lamps, lights it at a taper, and goes to the door. She and her companion look around.]

She should have been here now some time ago.  
What harm can have befallen her? God knows  
what;

It can be no good thing.

BIANCOFIORE.

You have not yet  
Come quite out of the horror of the dream,  
Madonna.

ALTICHIARA.

Breathe the air, the night is fresh,  
The night is still.

FRANCESCA.

The moon  
Is risen?

ALDA.

It must be rising on the hills,  
But there is yet no dawn upon the sea.  
[ADONELLA and GARSENDA re-enter. One of them  
puts out the lamp.]

FRANCESCA

[anxiously].  
Well? Is she there?

GARSENDA.

Madonna, there is no one.

ADONELLA.

Nothing but silence  
And darkness everywhere; the whole house  
sleeps.

GARSENDA.

We only saw . . .

[*She hesitates.*]

FRANCESCA.

You only saw . . . whom did you see?

GARSENDA

[*hesitating*].

Madonna,

Some one was there . . . some one was standing  
there,

Leaning against the wall . . .

Still as a statue . . . all alone . . . his girdle

Shining . . . Madonna, do not be afraid . . .

[*Goes near to her and lowers her voice.*]

It was Messer Paolo!

FRANCESCA

[*startled*].

O, why?

ADONELLA.

Madonna

Will have her hair made ready for the night?

FRANCESCA.

No, no, I am not sleepy. I will wait.

BIANCOFIORE.

Her shoes unloosed?

ALDA.

The perfumes?

FRANCESCA.

I will wait

A little more. I am no longer sleepy.

I will wait until Smaragdi comes.

ALTICHIARA.

Let me go

And seek her.

GARSEDA.

The poor thing is tired perhaps,  
At the day's end, and sleeps where she has  
dropped.

Perhaps she is lying now  
Upon the stairs.

FRANCESCA.

Go, go, and I will read  
Till you return. Bring me a taper, Alda.

[ALDA takes a taper and fixes it at the head of  
the reading-desk.]

Go now. You are all in white!  
The Summer is not dead?  
When it was evening, did you see the swallows  
Begin to fly away?  
I was elsewhere,  
I was looking on the hills,  
When the sun set to-night.  
They have not all flown yet, have they? But  
perhaps  
To-morrow all the other flocks will follow.  
I will go up on the tower, to see them go,  
And you will sing me a merry song, men dance  
to,  
As if 'twere the March calends. Have you still  
The flight of swallows painted, as you had?

ALDA.

Yes, Madonna.

FRANCESCA.

To-morrow at the dance  
You will put on  
Over these white  
Dresses a vest of black.  
You will be like  
"The creature of delight."

BIANCOFIORE.

Yes, Madonna.

FRANCESCA.

Go, go!

[*She opens the book.*]

[*Each of the WOMEN takes her silver lamp, which swings from a curved handle. First ADONELLA goes to the tall candlestick, and, standing on tiptoe, lights her lamp at one of the torches. She bows, and goes out, while FRANCESCA follows her with her eyes.*]

Go, too, Adonella!

[*GARSENDA does the same.*]

And you, Garsenda.

[*ALTICHIARA does the same.*]

And you, too, Altichiara.

[*ALDA does the same.*]

And you, Alda.

[*The four have gone out, one by one. BIANCOFIORE remains, and she also is about to light her lamp, but as she is shorter than the others, she cannot reach the flame.*]

Oh, Biancofiore, what a little one!

You will not ever reach to light your lamp.  
You are the gentlest of them. Little dove,

[BIANCOFIORE *turns smiling.*]

Come!

[BIANCOFIORE *goes up to her.* FRANCESCA *caresses her hair.*]

It is all of gold. You are, I think,  
A little like my sister; you remember her,  
Samaritana?

BIANCOFIORE.

Yes, indeed, Madonna.

Such sweetness cannot be forgot. I have her  
Here, in my heart, with the angels.

FRANCESCA.

She was sweet,  
My sister; was she not sweet, Biancofiore?  
Ah, if she were but here, if she might make  
Her little bed beside my bed to-night!  
If I might hear again  
Her little naked feet run to the window,  
If I might hear her run with naked feet,  
My little dove, and say, and say to me:  
"Francesca, now the morning-star is born,  
And it has chased away the Pleiades!"

BIANCOFIORE.

You weep, Madonna.

FRANCESCA.

You tremble, Biancofiore.  
She too was frightened of a sudden; I heard  
Her heart beat; and she said to me: "O sister,  
Listen to me: stay with me still, O stay  
With me! we were born here:



Do not forsake me!"  
And I said to her: "O take me,  
And let me be with you,  
And let one covering cover us!"

BIANCOFIORE.

O Madonna,  
Your words pierce through my heart,  
What melancholy holds you  
Still?

FRANCESCA.

No, no, do not weep:  
Gentle you are. But come, light your lamp  
here.

BIANCOFIORE.

May I not stay with you? May I not sleep  
Here, at the foot of the bed?

FRANCESCA.

No, Biancofiore. Light your lamp, and go,  
And God go with you. Now Samaritana,  
It may be, is thinking of her sister.

[BIANCOFIORE lights her lamp at the taper, and  
bends to kiss FRANCESCA's hand.]

Go,  
Go, do not weep. Let all sad thoughts go by.  
To-morrow you shall sing to me. Now go.

[BIANCOFIORE turns and walks slowly towards  
the door. As she is going out, FRANCESCA  
gives way to her presentiment.]

You are not going, Biancofiore?

BIANCOFIORE.

No,

I will stay with you, Madonna. Let me stay  
At least until Sinaragdi has come back.

FRANCESCA

*[Hesitates an instant].*

Go!

BIANCOFIORE.

God keep you, Madonna.

*[She goes out, closing the door behind her.]**[Left alone, FRANCESCA makes several steps  
towards the door; then stands still, listening.]*

FRANCESCA.

And let it be so if it is my fate.

*[Goes resolutely up to the door.]*

I will call him.

*[Hesitates and draws back.]*

He is still there, and he stands  
Leaning against the wall;  
Still as a statue, all alone; his girdle  
Shining in the shadow. Who said that to me?  
Who was it? Was it not said long ago?  
Within the helmet all the face like fire . . .

*[Visions pass before her soul in a flash.]*

He is silent, and the lances  
Of the spearmen round him.  
He stands, and the arrow whistles through his  
hair.  
He is cleansed from the pollution of the guile.  
He drains the long draught, throwing back his  
head.

Ah, now all's gone again!  
The enemy holds fast  
The secret and the sword.

"The executioner

I make me of your will."

But iron shall not divide the lips, but flame  
Shall not divide the lips.

[*She wanders to and fro, wretched and feverish.*]

The utmost flame of fire shall not divide them.

[*She takes up the silver mirror and looks at herself in it.*]

O silence, and still water, sepulchre,

Pale sepulchre of my face!

What is this voice that says

I never was more beautiful than now?

"And in the solitude that was on fire

With your eyes, I have lived

With so swift energy,

Travailing secretly" . . . .

One voice alone cries out

On the topmost of my heart,

And all the blood flies . . . . Ah!

[*She starts, hearing a light knocking at the door.*

*She puts down the mirror, blows out the taper  
with a breath, goes to the door, tottering, and  
calls, in a low voice.*]

Smaragdi! Smaragdi!

PAOLO

[*Voice heard*].

Francesca!

[*She flings the door open vehemently. With a  
craving as of thirst she throws herself into the  
arms of her lover.*]

FRANCESCA.

Paolo! Paolo!

*[He is dressed as at Vespers; his head is bare.]*

PAOLO.

Life of my life, never was my desire  
So ardent for you. In my heart I felt  
A dying down  
Of the bright spirits that live within your eyes.  
My forces ebbd away into the night,  
Out of my breast, a flood  
Terrible, clangorous,  
And fear took hold upon my soul, as when  
In that sealed hour,  
You put me to the test, God witnessing,  
The test of the arrow,  
And raised me there whither although he wills  
it  
No man returns by willing to return.  
Is it not morning, is it not morning yet?  
The stars have all gone down into your hair,  
Scattered about the confines of the shades,  
Where life may never find them!  
*[He kisses her hair passionately again and again.]*

FRANCESCA.

Pardon me,

Pardon me! Far away  
You come before me,  
Far off and silent,  
With fixed, dry eyeballs, as upon that day  
Between the inflexible lances of the fight.  
A hard sleep falling on me like a blow  
Scattered my soul  
As a stem breaks, and then I seemed to lie

Lost on the stones. And then there came to  
me

The dream that long while now  
I have seen in sleep, the strange  
Dream that has tortured me;  
And I was full of many terrors, full  
Of terrors; and my women  
Saw me, and how I trembled,  
And how I wept . . .

PAOLO.

O, wept!

FRANCESCA.

Pardon me, pardon me,  
Sweet friend! You have awakened me from  
sleep,  
Freed me from every anguish.  
It is not morning yet,  
The stars have not gone down into the sea,  
The summer is not over, and you are mine,  
And I, I am all yours,  
And this is perfect joy  
The passion of the ardour of our life.

[PAOLO *kisses her insatiably.*]

PAOLO.

You shivered?

FRANCESCA.

See, the door  
Is open, and there passes  
The breath of the night. Do you not feel it  
too?  
This is the hour,  
The hour of silence,

That sheds the dew of night  
Upon the manes  
Of horses on the roads.  
But shut the door.

[PAOLO *shuts the door.*]

Paolo, did you see with your own eyes  
The horsemen as they went away?

PAOLO.

Yes, yes,

I watched them from the tower, for a long  
while

Until the last lance faded  
Into the dark, and I could see no more.  
Come, come, Francesca! Many hours of glad-  
ness

We have before us,  
With the wild melody of unknown winds  
And the swift ravishment of solitude  
In fire, and the violent  
River without a goal,  
And the immortal thirst;  
But now this hour that flies  
Fills me with lust to live  
A thousand lives,  
In the quiver of the air that kisses you,  
In the short breath of the sea,  
In the fury of the world,  
That not one thing  
Of all the infinite things  
That are in you  
Lie hid from me,  
And I die not before I have ploughed up  
Out of your depths

And relished to its infinite root in you  
My perfect joy.

[*He draws her towards the cushions by the windows.*]

FRANCESCA.

Kiss me upon my eyes, upon my brow,  
Upon my cheeks, my throat,  
So . . . so . . .  
Stay, and my wrists, my fingers . . .  
So . . . so . . . And take my soul and pour it  
out,  
Because the breath of the night  
Turns back my soul again  
To things of long ago,  
And the low voices of the night turn back  
My soul to things that were,  
And joys enjoyed are they that now weigh  
down  
My heart, and as you were  
I see you still, and not as you shall be,  
My fair friend, my sweet friend.

PAOLO.

I will carry you where all things are forgot,  
And no more time made slave  
Is lord of our desire.  
Then shall the day and night  
Be mingled even as one  
Upon the earth as upon one sole pillow;  
Then shall the hands of dawn  
No more unclasp from one another's holding  
The dusky arms and the white arms of them,  
Nor yet untwist  
The tangles of their hair and veins.

FRANCESCA.

It says

Here in the book, here where you have not read:  
"We have been one life; it were a seemly thing  
That we be also one death."

PAOLO.

Let the book

Be closed!

*[He rises, closes the book on the reading desk, and  
blows out the taper.]*

And read in it no more. Not there  
Our destiny is written, but in the stars,  
That palpitate above  
As your throat palpitates,  
Your wrists, your brow,  
Perhaps because they were your garland once,  
Your necklet when you went  
Burningly through the ways of heaven? From  
what  
Vineyard of earth were these grapes gathered in?  
They have the smell  
Of drunkenness and honey,  
They are like veins, they are swollen with de-  
light,  
Fruits of the night! The flaming feet of Love  
Shall tread them in the winepress. Give me  
your mouth  
Again! again!

*[FRANCESCA lies back on the cushions, forgetful  
of everything. All at once, in the dead si-  
lence, a violent shock is heard on the door,*



*as if some one hurled himself against it. The lovers start up in terror, and rise to their feet.]*

THE VOICE OF GIANCIOTTO.

Francesca, open! Francesca!

*[The WOMAN is petrified with terror. PAOLO looks round the room, putting his hand to his dagger. He catches sight of the bolt of the trap-door.]*

PAOLO

*[In a low voice].*

Take heart, take heart, Francesca! I will get down

By the way of the trap-door.

Go, go, and open to him.

But do not tremble.

*[He lifts the trap-door. The door seems to quiver at the repeated blows.]*

THE VOICE OF GIANCIOTTO.

Open, Francesca, open!

PAOLO.

Open to him! Go now.

I wait beneath. If he but touches you

Cry out and I am with you.

Go boldly, do not tremble!

*[He begins to go down, while the WOMAN in obedience to him, goes to open the door, tottering.]*

THE VOICE OF GIANCIOTTO.

Open! upon your life, Francesca, open!

*[The door being opened GIANCIOTTO, armed, and covered with dust, rushes furiously into the*

room, looking for his brother in every direction. Suddenly he catches sight of PAOLO, standing head and shoulders above the level of the floor, struggling to free himself from the bolt of the trap-door, which has caught in a corner of his cloak. FRANCESCA utters a piercing cry, while GIANCIOTTO falls upon his brother, seizing him by the hair, and forcing him to come up.

GIANCIOTTO.

So, you are caught in a trap,  
Traitor! They are good to have you by the hair,  
Your ringlets!

FRANCESCA

[*rushing forward*].

Let him go!

Let him go! Me, take me!

[*The husband loosens his hold. PAOLA springs up on the other side of the trap-door, and unsheathes his dagger. GIANCIOTTO, drawing back, bares his sword, and rushes upon him with terrible force. FRANCESCA throws herself between the two men; but as her husband has leant all his weight on the blow, and is unable to draw back, her breast is pierced by the sword, she staggers, turns on herself, towards PAOLA, who lets fall his dagger, and catches her in his arms.*]

FRANCESCA

[*dying*].

Ah, Paolo!

[*GIANCIOTTO pauses for an instant. He sees the woman clasped in the arms of her lover, who*]

*seals her expiring life with his lips. Mad with rage and sorrow, he pierces his brother's side with another deadly thrust. The two bodies sway to and fro for an instant without a sound. Then, still linked together, they fall at full length on the pavement. GIANCIOTTO stoops in silence, bends his knee with a painful effort, and, across the other knee, breaks his blood-stained sword.]*







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